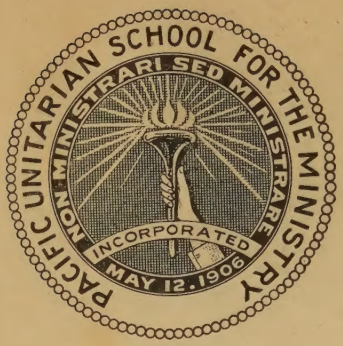

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A

REVIEW

OF THE

PRINCIPAL QUESTIONS

IN

MORALS.

PARTICULARLY

Thoſe reſpecting the ORIGIN of our IDEAS of VIRTUE, its NATURE, RELATION to the DEITY, OBLIGATION, SUBJECT-MATTER, and SANCTIONS.

THE THIRD EDITION CORRECTED,

AND ENLARGED BY AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING ADDITIONAL NOTES,

AND A DISSERTATION

On the BEING and ATTRIBUTES of the DEITY.

By RICHARD PRICE, D.D. F.R.S.

Ου γαρ εχω ειπειν ειδεν αλλο μοι εναργες ον, ως τελος ; το ΕΙΝΑΙ ως διον τε μαλιστα ΚΑΛΟΝ τε και ΑΓΑΘΟΝ. PLAT. in Phædone.

In Homine autem ſumma omnis animi eſt ; in animo, rationis ; ex qua VIRTUS *eſt, Quæ rationis abſolutio definitur. Quam* etiam atque etiam *explicandam putant.* CICERO, *De finibus*, lib. v. 14.

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1787

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Work was firſt publiſhed thirty years ago. It was then the Author's firſt production; and contained the reſult of ſome of his earlieſt thoughts. A careful reviſal has now made it the reſult of his lateſt and matureſt thoughts. The Notes in the Appendix contain an account of all the alterations which, ſince that time, have taken place in the Author's views and ſentiments on the ſubjects diſcuſſed in it.

The Diſſertation on the being and attributes of the Deity which follows theſe notes, has been always intended for this Treatiſe; but was omitted in the former editions on account of the difficulty there is in giving a juſt explanation of the ſubject of it. This conſideration has now leſs weight with the

Author; and therefore, after endeavouring to make the reaſoning in it as conciſe and perſpicuous as poſſible, he has determined to give it a place in this edition.

Several corrections have been made in the ſtyle and compoſition; but, in this reſpect, the following Treatiſe is ſtill very deficient, and will require much indulgence and candour.

Hackney, June 21ſt, 1787.

CON-

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION. Page 1

CHAP. I.

SECT. I. *The Question stated concerning the Foundation of Morals* p. 7

SECT. II. *Of the Origin of our Ideas in general.* p. 15

SECT. III. *Of the Origin of our Ideas of Right and Wrong in particular.* p. 57

CHAP. II.

Of our Ideas of the Beauty and Deformity of Actions. p. 87

CHAP. III.

Of the Origin of our Desires and Affections. p. 108

CHAP. IV.

Of our Ideas of good and ill Desert. p. 125

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Of the Reference of Morality to the Divine Nature, the Rectitude of our Faculties, and the Grounds of Belief. p. 136

CHAP. VI.

Of Fitneſs, and moral Obligation, and the various Forms of Expreſſion, which have been uſed by different Writers in explaining Morality. p. 168

CHAP. VII.

Of the Subject-matter of Virtue and its principal Heads and Diviſions. page 217

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Nature and Eſſentials of Virtue in Practice, *as diſtinguiſhed from* abſolute Virtue; *and particularly of the Intention accompanying the Practice of Virtue, and the Principle of Action in a virtuous Agent as ſuch.* p. 297

CHAP. IX.

Of the different Degrees of Virtue and Vice, and the Methods of eſtimating them. Of Difficul-

Difficulties attending the Practice of Virtue, the Use of Trial and Discipline in forming reasonable Beings to Virtue, and the Essentials of a good and bad Character. p. 340

CHAP. X.

The Account of Morality given in this Treatise applied to the Explication and Proof of some of the principal Doctrines and Facts of Natural Religion; particularly, the moral Attributes of God, his moral Government, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments. p. 399

Conclusion. p. 466

APPENDIX.

Additional Notes. p. 479

A Dissertation on the Being and Attributes of the Deity. p. 489

INTRODUCTION.

THE liberty which all readers take to pronounce concerning the merit of books, 'tis fit they ſhould enjoy; nor is he ſufficiently qualified for the province of writing, who finds himſelf at all diſpoſed to be out of humour with it, or who is not prepared for all its conſequences. It is however much to be wiſhed, that readers would, before they pronounce, take more time to conſider and examine, than they generally do. There are hardly any ſubjects ſo plain, as not to require care and attention to form a competent judgment of them. What then muſt we think of thoſe whom we continually ſee readily delivering their ſentiments concerning points they have never conſidered; and deciding peremptorily, without thought or ſtudy, on the moſt difficult queſtions? If ſuch are ever right, it can be only by chance. They ſpeak and think entirely at random, and therefore deſerve no regard.

But it is melancholy to ſee many, even of thoſe who take ſome pains to examine, almoſt as little entitled to regard, and as incompetent judges, as the moſt careleſs and unthinking; determined in their judgments by arguments the moſt trifling, and under the influence of paſſions the moſt unfavourable to the diſcovery of truth.

Theſe are conſiderations which afford a diſcouraging proſpect to writers in general, eſpecially to thoſe who write on any abſtruſe and controverted ſubjects. So great is the inattention of moſt perſons, their careleſſneſs and haſte in thinking and yet forwardneſs to determine, and ſo much do they like or diſlike according to their pre-conceived notions and prejudices, and not according to reaſon or upon any cloſe and impartial conſideration, that an author who ſhould entertain any ſanguine hopes of ſucceſs, whatever he might think of his cauſe or his arguments, would, in all probability, be greatly mortified. It might be added, that we are, in general, no leſs inclined to attach ourſelves immoderately to our opinions; than we are to embrace them before due examination, and to decide prematurely and capriciouſly.

I have,

I have, for my own part, ſuch a notion of the truth of theſe obſervations, that there are not perhaps many who leſs expect to be ever able to convince one perſon of a ſingle error. The more we know of men, the more we find that they are governed, in forming and maintaining their opinions, by their tempers, by intereſt, by humour and paſſion, and a thouſand nameleſs cauſes and particular turns and caſts of mind, which cannot but produce the greateſt diverſity of ſentiments among them, and render it impoſſible for them not to err. There are in truth none who are poſſeſſed of that cool and diſpaſſionate temper, that freedom from all wrong byaſſes, that habit of attention and patience of thought, and, alſo, that penetration and ſagacity of mind, which are the proper ſecurities againſt error. How much then do modeſty and diffidence become us? how open ought we to be to conviction, and how candid to thoſe of different ſentiments? Indeed the conſideration of the various ways, in which error may inſinuate itſelf into our minds; the many latent prejudices, by which we are liable to be influenced; the innumerable circumſtances in our own diſpoſitions, and in the appear-

ances of things which may insensibly draw us astray, and the unavoidable darkness and infirmities of the best and ablest men, shewing themselves frequently in mistakes of the strangest kind: such reflections are enough to dispose a considerate man to distrust almost all his opinions.

But yet, to indulge such a disposition, would be unreasonable. Notwithstanding these difficulties and discouragements, truth is still discoverable, and the honest and diligent may expect (at least in some measure, and on the most important points) to succeed in their enquiries after it. These reflections afford the strongest arguments for caution and care in enquiring, but none for despair or a desultory levity and fickleness of sentiment. They ought not to make us *sceptical*, though they demonstrate the folly of being *dogmatical*.

In the following treatise, most of the questions that are of any importance relating to morality and virtue will be considered; and many of them in a manner different from that in which they have been hitherto treated. The author offers it to the public with real diffidence, sensible that it has many defects;

defects; and conſcious of his own liableneſs to the cauſes of blindneſs and error which he has mentioned.—His principal view has been to trace the obligations of virtue up to the truth and the nature of things, and theſe to the Deity. The conſiderations he has offered on this important point have, in a great degree, ſatisfied his own mind; and this has led him to hope they may be of ſome uſe in aſſiſting the enquiries of others.

A

TREATISE

OF

Moral Good and Evil.

CHAP. I.

Of the Origin of our Ideas of Right and Wrong.

IN conſidering the actions of moral agents, we ſhall find in ourſelves three different perceptions concerning them, which are neceſſary to be carefully diſtinguiſhed.

The *firſt*, is our perception of right and wrong.

The *ſecond*, is our perception of beauty and deformity.

The *third* we expreſs, when we ſay, that actions are of *good* or *ill* deſert.

Each of theſe perceptions I propoſe ſeparately to examine, but particularly the *firſt*, with which I ſhall begin.

It is proper the reader ſhould carefully attend to the ſtate of the queſtion here to be conſidered; which, as clearly as I can, I ſhall lay before him.

SECT. I.

The Queſtion ſtated concerning the Foundation of Morals.

SOME actions we all feel ourſelves irreſiſtibly determined to approve, and others to diſapprove. Some actions we cannot but think *right*, and others *wrong*, and of all actions we are led to form ſome opinion, as either *fit* to be performed or *unfit*; or neither fit nor unfit to be performed; that is, *indifferent*. What the power within us is, which thus determines, is the queſtion to be conſidered.

A late very diſtinguiſhed writer, Dr. *Hutcheſon*, deduces our moral ideas from a *moral ſenſe*; meaning by this *ſenſe*, a power within

in us, different from reaſon, which renders certain actions pleaſing and others diſpleaſing to us. As we are ſo made, that certain impreſſions on our bodily organs ſhall excite certain ideas in our minds, and that certain outward forms, when preſented to us, ſhall be the neceſſary occaſions of pleaſure or pain. In like manner, according to Dr. *Hutcheſon*, we are ſo made, that certain affections and actions of moral agents ſhall be the neceſſary occaſions of agreeable or diſagreeable ſenſations in us, and procure our love or diſlike of them. He has indeed well ſhewn, that we have a faculty determining us *immediately* to approve or diſapprove actions, abſtracted from all views of private advantage; and that the higheſt pleaſures of life depend upon this faculty. Had he proceeded no farther, and intended nothing more by the *moral ſenſe*, than our *moral faculty* in general, little room would have been left for any objections: But then he would have meant by it nothing *new*, and he could not have been conſidered as the *diſcoverer* of it *. From the term *ſenſe*, which he applies

* In the Preface to his *Treatiſe on the Paſſions*, he tells us; (after taking notice of ſome gentlemen, who, by what

plies to it, from his rejection of all the arguments that have been uſed to prove it to be an intellectual power, and from the whole of his language on this ſubject; it is evident, he conſidered it as the effect of a *poſitive conſtitution* of our minds, or as an *implanted* and *arbitrary* principle by which a *reliſh* is given us for certain moral objects and forms and averſion to others, ſimilar to the reliſhes and averſions created by any of our other ſenſes. In other words; our ideas of morality, if this account is right, have the ſame origin with our ideas of the ſenſible qualities of bodies, the harmony of ſounds †, or the beauties of painting or ſculpture; that is, the mere good pleaſure of our Maker adapting the mind and its organs in a particular manner to certain objects. Virtue (as thoſe who embrace this ſcheme

what he had writ, had been convinced of a *moral ſenſe*;) that they had made him a *compliment which he did not think belonged to him, as if the world were indebted to him for the diſcovery of it.*

† If any perſon wants to be convinced, that this is a juſt repreſentation of Dr. *Hutcheſon*'s ſentiments, he need only read his *Illuſtrations on the Moral Senſe*, and particularly the 4th ſection at the concluſion. See alſo a *Note* at the end of the firſt of Mr. *Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays.*

ſcheme ſay) is an affair of taſte. Moral right and wrong, ſignify nothing *in the objects themſelves* to which they are applied, any more than agreeable and harſh; ſweet and bitter; pleaſant and painful; but only *certain effects in us*. Our perception of *right*, or moral good, in actions, is that agreeable *emotion*, or feeling, which certain actions produce in us; and of *wrong*, or moral evil, the contrary. They are particular modifications of our minds, or impreſſions which they are made to receive from the contemplation of certain actions, which the contrary actions *might* have occaſioned, had the Author of nature ſo pleaſed; and which to ſuppoſe to belong to theſe actions themſelves, is as abſurd as to aſcribe the pleaſure or uneaſineſs, which the obſervation of a particular form gives us, to the form itſelf. 'Tis therefore, by this account, improper to ſay of an action, that it *is right*, in much the ſame ſenſe that it is improper to ſay of an object of taſte, that it is *ſweet*; or of *pain*, that it is *in* fire.

The preſent enquiry therefore is; whether this be a true account of virtue or not; whether it *has* or has *not* a foundation in the *nature* of its object; whether *right* and

wrong

wrong are real characters of *actions*, or only qualities of our *minds*; whether, in ſhort, they denote what actions *are*, or only *ſenſations* derived from the particular frame and ſtructure of our natures.

I am perſuaded, all attentive perſons, who have not before conſidered this queſtion, will wonder that it ſhould be a ſubject of diſpute, and think I am going to undertake a very needleſs work. I have given the naked and juſt ſtate of it. And it is worth our attention, as we go along, that it is the *only* queſtion about the foundation of morals, which can rationally and properly be made a ſubject of debate. For, granting that we have perceptions of *moral right* and *wrong*, they muſt denote, either what the actions, to which we apply them, *are*, or only our *feelings*; and the *power* of perceiving them muſt be, either that power whoſe object is truth, or ſome *implanted power* or *ſenſe*. If the former is true, then is *morality* equally unchangeable with *all truth*: If, on the contrary, the latter is true, then is it that only which, according to the different conſtitutions of the *ſenſes* of beings, it *appears* to be to them.

As

As to the ſchemes which found morality on ſelf-love, on poſitive laws and compacts, or the Divine will; they muſt either mean, that moral good and evil are only other words for *advantageous* and *diſadvantageous*, *willed* and *forbidden*. Or they relate to a very different queſtion; that is, not to the queſtion, what is the nature and true *account* of virtue; but, what is the *ſubject-matter* of it *.

As far as the former may be the intention of the ſchemes I have mentioned, they afford little room for controverſy. Right and wrong when applied to actions which are commanded or forbidden by the will of God, or that produce good or harm, do not ſignify merely, that ſuch actions are commanded or forbidden, or that they are uſeful or hurtful, but a *ſentiment* concerning them and our conſequent approbation or diſapprobation of the performance of them. Were not

* It ſhould be conſidered, that the phraſe *foundation* of virtue has the different ſignifications of an account or origin of virtue; of a conſideration or principle inferring and proving it in particular caſes; and of a motive to the practice of it: and that it is here uſed in the firſt of theſe ſenſes only.—See the beginning of the laſt Chapter in the Second Part.

not this true, it would be palpably absurd in any case to ask, whether it is *right* to obey a command, or *wrong* to disobey it; and the propositions, *obeying a command is right*, or *producing happiness is right*, would be most trifling, as expressing no more than that obeying a command, is obeying a command, or producing happiness, is producing happiness. Besides; on the supposition, that right and wrong denote only the relations of actions to will and law, or to happiness and misery, there could be no dispute about the faculty that perceives right and wrong, since it must be owned by all, that these relations are objects of the investigations of *reason*.

Happiness requires something in its own nature, or in ours, to give it influence, and to determine our desire of it and approbation of pursuing it. In like manner; all laws, will, and compacts suppose *antecedent right* to give them effect; and, instead of being the *constituents* of right, they owe their whole force and obligation to it.

Having premised these observations; the question now returns—What is the power within us that perceives the distinctions of *right* and *wrong*?

My

My anſwer is. The UNDERSTANDING.

In order to prove this, it is neceſſary to enter into a particular enquiry into the origin of our ideas in general, and the diſtinct provinces of the *underſtanding* and of *ſenſe*.

SECT. II.

Of the Origin of our Ideas in general.

SENSATION and REFLECTION have been commonly reckoned the ſources of all our ideas: and Mr. *Locke* has taken no ſmall pains to prove this. How much ſoever, on the whole, I admire his excellent *Eſſay*, I cannot think him ſufficiently clear or explicit on this ſubject. It is hard to determine exactly what he meant by *ſenſation* and *reflection*. If by the former we underſtand, the effects ariſing from the impreſſions made on our minds by external objects; and by the latter, the notice the mind takes of its own operations; it will be impoſſible to derive ſome of the moſt important of our ideas from them. This is the explanation Mr. *Locke* gives of them in the beginning of his *Eſſay*. But it ſeems probable that what he chiefly meant, was, that all

all our ideas are either derived *immediately* from theſe two ſources, or ultimately *grounded* upon ideas ſo derived; or, in other words, that they furniſh us with all the ſubjects, materials, and occaſions of knowledge, compariſon, and internal perception. This, however, by no means renders them in any proper ſenſe, the ſources of all our ideas: Nor indeed does it appear, notwithſtanding all he has ſaid of the operations of the mind about its ideas, that he thought we had any faculty different from ſenſation and reflection which could give riſe to any *ſimple ideas*; or that was capable of more than compounding, dividing, abſtracting, or enlarging ideas previouſly in the mind. But be this as it may, what I am going to obſerve, will, I believe, be found true.

The power, I aſſert, that *underſtands*; or the faculty within us that diſcerns *truth*, and that compares all the objects of thought, and *judges* of them, is a ſpring of new ideas*.

As

* The reader is deſired to remember, that by *ideas*, I mean here almoſt conſtantly *ſimple ideas*, or original and uncompounded perceptions of the mind. That our ideas of right and wrong are of this ſort, will be particularly obſerved hereafter. It may alſo be right to take notice, that I all along ſpeak of the underſtanding,

As, perhaps, this has not been enough attended to, and as the queſtion to be diſcuſſed, is; whether our *moral ideas* are derived from the *underſtanding* or from a *ſenſe*; it will be neceſſary to ſtate diſtinctly the different natures and provinces of ſenſe and reaſon.

To this purpoſe we may obſerve, firſt, that the power which judges of the perceptions of the ſenſes, and contradicts their deciſions; which diſcovers the nature of the ſenſible qualities of objects, enquires into

their

ing, in the moſt confined and proper ſenſe of it. What gives occaſion for obſerving this, is the diviſion which has been made by ſome writers, of all the powers of the ſoul into underſtanding and will; the former comprehending under it, all the powers of external and internal ſenſation, as well as thoſe of judging and reaſoning; and the latter, all the affections of the mind, as well as the power of acting and determining.

There may be further ſome occaſion for obſerving, that the two acts of the underſtanding, being intuition and deduction, I have in view the former. 'Tis plain, on the contrary, that thoſe writers, who argue againſt referring our moral ideas to reaſon, have generally the latter only in view.

their cauſes, and diſtinguiſhes between what is real and what is not real in them, muſt be a power within us which is ſuperior to ſenſe.

Again, it is plain that one ſenſe cannot judge of the objects of another; the eye, for inſtance, of harmony, or the ear of colours. The faculty therefore which views and compares the objects of *all* the ſenſes, cannot be ſenſe. When, for inſtance, we conſider ſound and colour together, we obſerve in them *eſſence*, *number*, *identity*, *diverſity*, &c. and determine their reality to conſiſt, not in being properties of *external ſubſtances*, but in being modifications of *our ſouls*. The power which takes cognizance of all this, and gives riſe to theſe notions, muſt be a power capable of ſubjecting all things alike to its inſpection, and of acquainting itſelf with neceſſary truth and exiſtence.

Senſe conſiſts in the obtruding of certain impreſſions upon us, independently of our wills; but it cannot perceive what they are, or whence they are derived. It lies proſtrate under its object, and is only a capacity in the ſoul of having its own ſtate altered by the influence of particular cauſes.

It

It muſt therefore remain a ſtranger to the objects and cauſes affecting it.

Were not *ſenſe* and *knowledge* entirely different, we ſhould reſt ſatisfied with ſenſible impreſſions, ſuch as light, colours, and ſounds, and enquire no farther about them, at leaſt when the impreſſions are ſtrong and vigorous: Whereas, on the contrary, we neceſſarily deſire ſome farther acquaintance with them, and can never be ſatisfied till we have ſubjected them to the ſurvey of reaſon.—Senſe preſents *particular* forms to the mind; but cannot riſe to any *general* ideas. It is the intellect that examines and compares the preſented forms, that riſes above individuals to univerſal and abſtract ideas; and thus looks downward upon objects, takes in at one view an infinity of particulars, and is capable of diſcovering general truths.—Senſe ſees only the *outſide* of things, reaſon acquaints itſelf with their *natures*.—Senſation is only a mode of feeling in the mind; but knowledge implies an active and vital energy of the mind. Feeling pain, for example, is the effect of ſenſe; but the underſtanding is employed when pain itſelf is made an object of the mind's reflexion, or held up before it, in order to diſcover its

nature and cauſes. Mere ſenſe can perceive nothing in the moſt exquiſite work of art; ſuppoſe a plant, or the body of an animal; but what is painted in the eye, or what might be deſcribed on paper. It is the intellect that muſt perceive in it order and proportion; variety and regularity; deſign, connection, art, and power; aptitudes, dependencies, correſpondencies, and adjuſtment of parts ſo as to ſubſerve an end, and compoſe one perfect whole *; things which can

* See Dr. *Cudworth*'s Treatiſe *of eternal and immutable Morality*, Book IV. Chap. 2. where he obſerves, that the mind perceives, by occaſion of outward objects, as much more than is repreſented to it by ſenſe, as a learned man perceives in the beſt written book, more than an illiterate perſon or brute. To the eyes of both the ſame characters will appear; but the learned man in thoſe characters (to uſe Dr. *Cudworth*'s words) will "ſee heaven, earth, ſun, and ſtars; read profound "theorems of philoſophy or geometry; learn a great "deal of knowledge from them, and admire the wiſ-"dom of the compoſer: While to the other nothing "appears but black ſtrokes drawn upon white paper. "The reaſon of which is, that the mind of the one is "furniſhed with certain previous inward anticipations, "ideas, and inſtruction, that the other wants.——In "the room of this book of *human* compoſition, let us "now (adds he) ſubſtitute the book of nature, written "all over with the characters and impreſſions of *divine* "wiſdom

can never be repreſented on a ſenſible organ, and the ideas of which cannot be paſſively communicated, or ſtamped on the mind by the operation of external objects.—Senſe cannot perceive any of the modes of thinking beings; theſe can be diſcovered only by the mind's ſurvey of itſelf.

In a word, it appears that *ſenſe* and *underſtanding* are faculties of the ſoul totally different: The one being converſant only about *particulars*; the other about *univerſals*: The one not *diſcerning*, but *ſuffering*; the other not *ſuffering*, but *diſcerning*; and ſignifying the ſoul's *Power* of ſurveying

" wiſdom and goodneſs, but legible only to an intellec-
" tual eye; for the ſenſe both of man and brute, there
" appears nothing elſe in it, but as in the other, ſo
" many inky ſcrawls; *i. e.* nothing but figures and co-
" lours: But to the mind, which hath a participation
" of the divine wiſdom that made it, and being printed
" all over with the ſame archetypal ſeal, upon occaſion
" of thoſe ſenſible delineations, and taking notice of
" whatſoever is cognate to it, exerting its own inward
" activity from thence, will have not only a wonder-
" ful ſcene, and large proſpects of other thoughts laid
" open before it, and variety of knowledge, logical,
" mathematical, and moral diſplayed; but alſo clearly
" read the divine wiſdom and goodneſs in every page
" of this great volume, as it were written in large and
" legible characters."

and examining all things, in order to judge of them; which *Power*, perhaps, can hardly be better defined, than by calling it, in *Plato*'s language, the power in the ſoul to which belongs κατάληψις τοῦ ὄντος, or the apprehenſion of TRUTH *.

But, in order farther to ſhew how little a way mere ſenſe (and let me add *imagination*, a faculty nearly allied to *ſenſe*) can go, and how far we are dependent on our higher reaſonable powers for many of our fundamental ideas; I would inſtance in the following particulars.

The idea of *ſolidity* has been generally reckoned among the ideas we owe to ſenſe; and yet perhaps it would be difficult to prove, that we ever had actual experience of that *impenetrability* which we include in it, and conſider as eſſential to all bodies. In order to this, we muſt be ſure, that we have, ſome time or other, made two bodies really touch, and found that they would not penetrate one another: but it is not impoſſible to account for all the facts we obſerve, without ſuppoſing, in any caſe, *abſolute con-*

* Moſt of theſe obſervations concerning the difference between ſenſe and knowledge, may be found in *Plato's Thætetus*; and in the Treatiſe quoted in the laſt note.

contact between bodies. And though we could make the experiment, yet one experiment, or even a million, could not be a ſufficient foundation for the abſolute aſſurance we have that no bodies *can* penetrate one another. Not to add, that all that would appear to the ſenſes in ſuch experiments, would be the *conjunction* of two events, not their *neceſſary connexion.* Are we then to affirm, that there is no idea of *impenetrability*; that two atoms of matter, continuing diſtinct and without the annihilation of either, *may* occupy the ſame place; and all the atoms of matter be crowded into the room and bulk of one; and theſe, for the ſame reaſon, into room leſs and leſs to infinity, without in the mean while making any diminution of the quantity of matter in the univerſe? This, indeed, might be the conſequence, were it certain that all our ideas, on this ſubject, are derived from *ſenſation*; and did nothing further than it acquaints us with, appear to *reaſon.* There are many inſtances in which two material ſubſtances apparently run into one another. It is reaſon, that, from its own perceptions, determines ſuch to be fallacious appearances, and aſſures us of the univerſal and ſtrict neceſſity of the contrary. The ſame power

that perceives two particles to be *different*, perceives them to be *impenetrable*; for they are as neceſſarily the one as the other; it being ſelf-evident, that they cannot occupy the ſame place without loſing all difference.

Again, what is meant by the *vis inertiæ*, or *inactivity* of matter, is rather a perception of reaſon, than an idea conveyed to the mind by ſenſe. This property of matter is the foundation of all our reaſoning about it: And thoſe who reject it, or who will allow no other ſource of our knowledge of matter and motion, than *experience*, or the information conveyed to the mind through the ſenſes, would do well to conſider, whether the three axioms (or laws of motion) on which Sir *Iſaac Newton* founds his philoſophy, are not entirely without evidence and meaning.—What is it acquaints us, that every body will for ever continue in the ſtate of reſt or motion it is in, unleſs ſomething produces an alteration of that ſtate; that every alteration of its motion muſt be proportional to the force impreſſed, and in the ſame line of direction; and that its action upon another body, and the action of that other upon it, are always equal and contrary? In other words; what furniſhes

niſhes us with our ideas of reſiſtance and inactivity?—Not *experience*: for never did any man yet ſee any portion of matter that was void of *gravity*, and many other active powers; or that would not immediately quit its ſtate of reſt, and begin to move; and alſo *loſe* or *acquire* motion after the impreſſing of new force upon it, without any *viſible* or *diſcoverable* cauſe. Ideas ſo contradictory to ſenſe cannot be derived from it. They muſt therefore be aſcribed to a higher origin.

But though we ſhould ſuppoſe them the objects of conſtant *experience*, as well as the perceptions of *reaſon*, yet, as diſcovered by the former, they muſt be very different from what they are, as apprehended by the latter. Though, for inſtance, *experience* and obſervation taught us always, that the alteration of motion in a body is proportional to the impreſſed force, and made in the line of direction in which this force acts; yet they can teach us this but very imperfectly: they cannot inform us of it with preciſion and exactneſs. They can only ſhew us, that it is ſo *nearly*; which, ſtrictly ſpeaking, is the ſame with not being ſo at all. The eye of

ſenſe

ſenſe is blunt. The conceptions of the imagination are rude and groſs, falling *infinitely* ſhort of that certainty, accuracy, univerſality, and clearneſs, which belong to *intellectual diſcernment*.

The idea of *ſubſtance*, likewiſe, is an idea to which our minds are neceſſarily carried, beyond what mere ſenſation ſuggeſts to us; which can ſhew us nothing but accidents, ſenſible qualities, and the outſides of things. 'Tis the underſtanding that diſcovers the general diſtinction between ſubſtance and accident; nor can any perception be more unavoidable, than that motion implies *ſomething* that moves; *extenſion* ſomething *extended*; and, in general, *modes* ſomething *modified*.

The idea of *Duration* is an idea accompanying all our ideas, and included in every notion we can frame of reality and exiſtence. What the obſervation of the train of thoughts following one another in our minds, or the conſtant flux of external objects, ſuggeſts, is *ſucceſſion*; an idea which, in common with all others, preſuppoſes that of *duration*; but is as different from it as the idea of motion, or figure. It would, I think, have been much properer to have ſaid

ſaid, that the reflection on the ſucceſſion of ideas in our minds is that by which we eſtimate the *quantity* of duration intervening between two events; than, that we owe to it the idea of duration.

Obſervations to the ſame purpoſe might be made concerning *Space*. This, as well as duration, is included in every reflection we can make on our own exiſtence, or that of other things; it being ſelf-evidently the ſame with *denying* the exiſtence of a thing, to ſay, that it exiſts *no where*. We, and all things, exiſt in *time* and *place*; and therefore, as ſelf-conſcious and intelligent beings, we muſt have ideas of them.

What may be farther worth obſerving concerning ſpace and duration, is, that we perceive intuitively their *neceſſary exiſtence*. The very notion of annihilation being the removal of a thing from ſpace and duration; to ſuppoſe theſe themſelves annihilated, would be to ſuppoſe their ſeparation from themſelves. In the ſame intuitive manner we perceive they can have no *bounds*, and thus acquire the idea of *Infinity*. The very notion of *bounds* implies them, and therefore cannot be applicable to them, unleſs

leſs they could be bounded by themſelves *. Theſe perceptions are plainly the notice the underſtanding takes of neceſſary truth; and the ſame account is to be given of the manner in which we come by our ideas of *infinity* and *neceſſity* in *time* and *ſpace* (and I may add in abſtract truth and power) as, of the manner in which we come by our ideas of any other ſelf-evident reality; of the *equality*, for inſtance, between the oppoſite angles of two lines croſſing one another, or of the *identity* of any particular object while it continues to exiſt.

There are other objects which the ſame faculty, with equal evidence, perceives to be *contingent*; or whoſe actual exiſtence it ſees to be not *neceſſary*, but only *poſſible*.

Thus, the Underſtanding, by employing its attention about different objects, and obſerving what is or is not *true* of them, acquires the different ideas of neceſſity, infinity, contingency, poſſibility, and impoſſibility.

The

* It is alſo in the ſame manner we perceive the parts of ſpace to be immoveable and inſeparable. *Ut partium temporis ordo eſt immutabilis, ſic etiam ordo partium ſpatii. Moveantur hæ de locis ſuis, & movebuntur (ut ita dicam a ſeipſis.* Newt. Princip.

The next ideas I ſhall inſtance in are thoſe of *Power* and *Cauſation*. Some of the ideas already mentioned imply them; but they require our particular notice and attention. Nothing may, at firſt ſight, ſeem more obvious, than that one way in which they are conveyed to the mind, is, by obſerving the various changes that happen about us, and our conſtant experience of the events ariſing upon ſuch and ſuch applications of external objects to one another: And yet I am well perſuaded, that this experience is alone quite incapable of furniſhing us with theſe ideas.

What we obſerve by our external ſenſes, is properly no more than that one thing *follows* another *, or the *conſtant conjunction* of certain events; as of the melting of wax, with placing it in the flame of a candle; and,

* Several obſervations to this purpoſe are made by *Malebranche*, who ('tis well known) has maintained, that nothing in nature is ever the proper *cauſe* or *efficient* of another, but only the *occaſion*; the Deity, according to him, being the ſole agent in all effects and events. But Mr. *Hume* has more particularly inſiſted on the obſervation here made, with a very different view. See his *Phil. Eſſays*.

and, in general, of ſuch and ſuch alterations in the qualities of bodies, with ſuch and ſuch circumſtances of their ſituation. That one thing is the *cauſe* of another, or *produces* it, we never ſee: Nor is it indeed true, in numberleſs inſtances where men commonly think they obſerve it: And were it in no one inſtance true; I mean, were there no object that contributed, by its own proper force, to the production of any new event; were the *apparent* cauſes of things univerſally only their *occaſions* or *concomitants*; (which is nearly the real caſe, according to ſome philoſophical principles;) yet ſtill we ſhould have the ſame ideas of cauſe, and effect, and power. Our certainty that every new event requires ſome cauſe, depends no more on experience than our certainty of any other the moſt obvious ſubject of intuition. In the idea of every *change* is included that of its being an *effect*.

The neceſſity of a cauſe of whatever events ariſe is an eſſential principle, a primary perception of the underſtanding; nothing being more palpably abſurd than the notion of a change which has been *derived* from nothing,

nothing, and of which there is no reaſon to be given; of an exiſtence which has *begun*, but never was *produced*; of a body, for inſtance, that has *ceaſed* to move, but has not been *ſtopped*; or that has *begun* to move, without being *moved*. Nothing can be done to convince a perſon, who profeſſes to deny this, beſides referring him to common ſenſe. If he cannot find there the perception I have mentioned, he is not farther to be argued with, for the ſubject will not admit of argument; there being nothing clearer than the point itſelf diſputed to be brought to confirm it. And he who will acknowledge that we have ſuch a perception, but will at the ſame time ſay that it is to be aſcribed to a different power from the underſtanding, ſhould inform us why the ſame ſhould not be aſſerted of all ſelf-evident truth.

It ſhould be obſerved, that I have not ſaid that we have no idea of power, except from the underſtanding. Activity and ſelf-determination are as eſſential to ſpirit, as the contrary are to matter; and therefore inward conſciouſneſs gives us the idea of that particular ſort of power which they imply. But the univerſal ſource of the idea of power,

as

as we conceive it neceſſary to the production of all that happens, and of our notions of influence, connexion, aptitude, and dependence in general, muſt be the underſtanding. Some active or paſſive powers, ſome *capacity* or *poſſibility* of *receiving* changes and *producing* them, make an eſſential part of our ideas of all objects: And theſe powers differ according to the different natures of the objects, and their different relations to one another. What can *do* nothing; what is fitted to anſwer no purpoſe, and has no kind of dependence, aptitude, or power belonging to it, can be nothing real or ſubſtantial. Were all things wholly unconnected and looſe; and did no one event or object, in any circumſtances, imply any thing beyond itſelf; all the foundations of knowledge would be deſtroyed. It is, on all hands, confeſſed, that things appear otherwiſe to us, and that in numberleſs inſtances we are under a neceſſity of conſidering them as connected, and of inferring one thing from another. Why ſhould not this be accounted for by a *real* connection between the things themſelves? Is it poſſible, for example, any one ſhould think, that there is no ſort of real connection perceiveable by reaſon,

reaſon, between probity of mind and juſt actions, or between certain impulſes of bodies on one another and an alteration of their motions?

Indeed, the whole meaning of *accounting* for a fact, implies ſomething in the nature of objects and events that includes a connexion between them, or a fitneſs in certain ways to influence one another. 'Till we can diſcover this, we are always conſcious of ſomewhat farther to be known. While we only ſee one thing conſtantly attending or following another, without perceiving the real dependence and connexion; (as in the caſe of gravitation, and the ſenſations attending certain impreſſions on our bodily organs) we are neceſſarily diſſatisfied, and feel a ſtate of mind very different from that entire acquieſcence, which we experience upon conſidering Sir *Iſaac Newton*'s laws of motion, or any other inſtances and facts, in which we ſee the neceſſary connexion and truth.

In conformity to theſe obſervations we always find, that when we have adequate ideas of the natures and properties of any beings or objects, we at the ſame time perceive their *powers*, and can foretel, inde-

pendently of experience, what they will produce in given circumſtances, and what will follow upon ſuch and ſuch applications of them to one another. Were we thoroughly acquainted with the heart of a man, the turn of his temper, and the make of his mind, we ſhould never want experience to inform us, what he will do, or how far he is to be truſted. In like manner, did we know that inward fabric and conſtitution of the bodies ſurrounding us on which all their properties and powers depend, we ſhould know before-hand what would be the reſult of any experiments we could make with them: Juſt as from having a complete idea of the real eſſence of a circle, we can deduce the ſeveral properties of it depending on that eſſence, and determine what will be the proportion of lines and angles drawn, after a certain manner in it. And, had we a perfect inſight into the conſtitution of nature, the laws that govern it, and the motions, texture, and relations of the ſeveral bodies that compoſe it; the whole chain of future events in it would be laid open to us. *Experience* and obſervation are only of uſe, when we are ignorant of the nature of the object, and cannot, in a more perfect, ſhort,

ſhort, and certain way, determine what will be the event in particular caſes, and what are the uſes of particular objects *. *Inſtinct* is a ſtill lower and more imperfect means of ſupplying the ſame defect of knowledge.

* The conviction produced by experience is built on the ſame principle with that which aſſures us, that there muſt be a cauſe of every event, and ſome account of whatever happens. The frequent repetition of a particular event, as of the falling of a heavy body to the earth, produces an expectation of its happening again in future trials: Becauſe we ſee intuitively, that there being ſome reaſon or cauſe of this *conſtancy of event*, it muſt be derived from a cauſe regularly and conſtantly operating in given circumſtances. In the very ſame manner, and upon the ſame principle, we ſhould conclude, upon obſerving a particular number on a die thrown very often without one failure, that it would be thrown alſo in any ſucceeding trial: And the more frequently and uninterruptedly we knew this had happened, the ſtronger would be our expectation of its happening again, becauſe the more evident would it be, that either all the ſides of the die were marked with the ſame number, or that ſome art was uſed in throwing it, or that there was ſomething in the conſtitution of it that diſpoſed it to turn up that particular ſide, rather than any other.—However ſtrange it may appear, it is probably true, that what occaſions the doubts and difficulties which are raiſed about this, and ſome other points of the cleareſt nature, is their being ſelf-evident; and that what

With reſpect to all the ideas now mentioned, particularly the laſt, it is worth obſerving, that were it as difficult to find out their true origin, as it is to deduce them from the common ſources explained by writers on theſe ſubjects, it would ſurely be very unreaſonable to conclude, that we have no ſuch ideas. And yet this is the very concluſion ſome have drawn *. If then we indeed have ſuch ideas; and if, beſides, they have a foundation in truth, and are ideas of ſomewhat really exiſting correſpondent to them, what difficulty can there be in granting they may be apprehended by that faculty whoſe object is truth? But if we have no ſuch ideas, or if they denote nothing real beſides the qualities of our own minds; I need not ſay into what an abyſs of ſcepticiſm we are plunged.

Let

what is meant by ſaying, that it is not reaſon that informs us there muſt be ſome account of whatever comes to paſs, and ſome *eſtabliſhed* cauſes of conſtant and uniform events, or that order and regularity can proceed only from deſign, muſt be, that they are not ſubjects of *deduction*; that is, that they are ſo plain, that there is nothing plainer from which they can be *inferred*.

* See Mr. *Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays*, p. 104, &c.

Let me add, in the laſt place, that our *abſtract ideas* ſeem moſt properly to belong to the underſtanding. They are, undoubtedly, eſſential to all its operations; every act of judgment implying ſome abſtract or univerſal idea. Were they formed by the mind in the manner generally repreſented, it ſeems unavoidable to conceive that it *has* them at the very time that it is ſuppoſed to be employed in *forming* them. Thus; from any *particular* idea of a triangle, it is ſaid we can frame the *general* one; but does not the very reflexion ſaid to be neceſſary to this, on a greater or leſſer triangle, imply, that the general idea is already in the mind? How elſe ſhould it know how to go to work, or what to reflect on?—That the univerſality conſiſts in the *idea*; and not merely in the *name* as uſed to ſignify a number of particulars *reſembling* that which is the immediate object of reflexion, is plain; becauſe, was the idea to which the name anſwers and which it recalls into the mind, only a particular one, we could not know to what other ideas to apply it, or what particular objects had the reſemblance neceſſary to bring them within the meaning of the name. A perſon, in reading over a mathematical

demonſtration, certainly is conſcious that it relates to ſomewhat elſe, than juſt that preciſe figure preſented to him in the diagram. But if he knows not *what* elſe, of what uſe can the demonſtration be to him? How is his knowledge enlarged by it? Or how ſhall he know afterwards to what to apply it?—All that can be pictured in the imagination, as well as all that we take notice of by our ſenſes, is indeed particular. And whenever any general notions are preſent in the mind, the imagination, at the ſame time, is commonly engaged in repreſenting to itſelf ſome of the particulars comprehended under them. But it would be a very ſtrange inference from hence, that we have none but particular ideas. As well almoſt might we conclude, that we have no other notion of any thing than of its name, becauſe they are ſo aſſociated in our minds that we cannot ſeparate them; or of the ſun, than as a white, bright circle, ſuch as we ſee in the heavens, becauſe this image is apt to accompany all our thoughts of it *.

It

* According to Dr. *Cudworth*, abſtract ideas are implied in the *cognoſcitive power of the mind*; *which*, *he ſays*, *contains in itſelf virtually* (*as the future plant or tree is contained*

It is a capital error, into which thoſe perſons run who confound the underſtanding with the imagination, and deny reality and poſſibility to every thing the latter cannot

 conceive,

tained in the ſeed) *general notions of all things, which are exerted by it, or unfold and diſcover themſelves as occaſions invite and proper circumſtances occur.* This, no doubt, many will very freely condemn as whimſical and extravagant. I have, I own, a different opinion of it; but yet, I ſhould not care to be obliged to defend it. It is what he thought, *Plato* meant by making all *knowledge* to be *Reminiſcence*; and in this, as well as other reſpects, he makes the human mind to reſemble the Divine; to which the ideas and comprehenſion of all things are eſſential, and not to be derived from any foreign ſource.

It may at leaſt be ſaid, that thought, knowledge, and underſtanding, being the originals and cauſes of all particular *ſenſibles*, and therefore *before* them and *above* them, cannot be derived from them, or dependent upon them; and that what is thus true of *mind* in general, and particularly of that firſt and all-diſpoſing mind from which all inferior minds ſprung and of which they participate, 'tis reaſonable to think true, in a lower degree alſo of theſe inferior minds, and of their ideas and knowledge.

The opinion that univerſal ideas are formed out of particular ones, by ſeparating common from individuating circumſtances, this learned writer rejects as very abſurd, and founded on a miſtake of *Ariſtotle*'s ſenſe. And the other opinion, that they are only *ſingular* ideas annexed to a *common* term; or, in other words, names without

conceive, however clear and certain to the former. The powers of the imagination are very narrow; and were the underſtanding confined to the ſame limits, nothing could

without any meaning; (held formerly by thoſe, who were therefore called *Nominaliſts*, and of late revived) *he pronounces to be ſo ridiculouſly falſe, as to deſerve no confutation.* Vid. Eternal and immutable morality.

" Do we allow it poſſible for God to ſignify his will " to men; or for men to ſignify their wants to God? " —In both theſe caſes there muſt be an *identity of ideas.* " —Whence then do theſe COMMON IDENTIC IDEAS " come?—Thoſe of men it ſeems come all from *ſen-* " *ſation.* And whence come *God's Ideas?* Not ſurely " from *ſenſation* too: For this we can hardly venture " to affirm without giving to *body* that *notable precedence* " *of being prior to the intellection of even God himſelf*— " Let them then be *original*; let them be *connate* and " eſſential to the Divine mind—If this be true, is it " not a fortunate event, that Ideas of corporeal riſe, " and others of mental (things derived from ſubjects " ſo totally diſtinct) ſhould ſo happily coincide in the " ſame wonderful identity?—Had we not better rea- " ſon thus on ſo abſtruſe a ſubject?—Either all MINDS " have their ideas *derived*; or all have them *original*; " or *ſome have them original, and ſome derived.* If all " minds have them *derived*, they muſt be derived from " ſomething *which is itſelf not mind*, and thus we fall " inſenſibly into a kind of Atheiſm. If all have them " *original, then are all minds Divine*; an hypotheſis by " far more plauſible than the former. But if this be

" not

could be known, and the very faculty itſelf would be annihilated —Nothing is plainer, than that one of theſe often perceives where the other is blind; is ſurrounded with light where

" not admitted, then muſt *one* mind (at leaſt) have *ori-*
" *ginal* ideas, and the reſt have them *derived.* Now
" ſuppoſing this laſt, whence are thoſe minds whoſe
" ideas are derived moſt likely to derive them?—From
" MIND or from BODY?—From MIND, ſuch as (from
" the hypotheſis) has *orignal ideas*, or from body which
" we cannot diſcover to have any ideas at all?—It is
" thus we ſhall be enabled with more aſſurance to de-
" cide, whether we are to admit the doctrine of the
" Epicurean poet,

" CORPOREA NATURA *animum conſtare,*
" Animamque;

" Or truſt the *Mantuan Bard* when he ſings in Divine
" numbers.

" *Igneus eſt ollis vigor, et* CÆLESTIS ORIGO
" *Seminibus*——

See HERMES, or a *Philoſophical Inquiry concerning Univerſal Grammar.* By JAMES HARRIS, Eſq; Page 399, &c. ſecond Edition.

" Thoſe Philoſophers, (ſays the ſame learned writer,)
" whoſe ideas of *being* and *knowledge* are derived from
" *body* and *ſenſation*, have a ſhort method to ex-
" plain the nature of TRUTH. 'Tis a *factitious* thing,
" made by every man for himſelf, which comes and
" goes,

where the other finds all darkneſs; and, in numberleſs inſtances, knows things to exiſt of which the other can frame no idea. What is more impoſſible, than for the imagination to repreſent to itſelf matter without colour; but thus is it perceived by the underſtanding, which pronounces, without doubt or heſitation, that colour is not a property of matter. Points, lines, and ſurfaces, alſo, as mathematicians conſider them, are entirely intellectual objects no notice whereof ever entered the mind by the ſenſes, and which are utterly inconceivable to the imagination. Does it follow from hence, that

" goes, juſt as it is remembered or forgot; which in " the order of things makes its appearance the laſt of " any, being not only ſubſequent to *ſenſible* objects, " but even to our *ſenſations* of them, &c. But there " are other reaſoners, who muſt ſurely have had very " different notions; thoſe I mean who repreſent " TRUTH not as the *laſt*, but the *firſt* of beings, who " call it *immutable*, *eternal*, *omnipreſent*; attributes that " all indicate ſomething more than human, &c. For " my own part, when I read the detail about *ſenſation* " and *reflection*, and am taught the proceſs at large " how my ideas are all generated, I ſeem to view the " human ſoul in the light of a crucible, where truths " are produced by a kind of logical chemiſtry." Ib. p. 403.

that there are no ſuch things? Are we to believe that there can exiſt no particles of matter ſmaller than we can imagine to ourſelves, or that there is no other kind or degree of equality, than can be judged of by the eye? This has been maintained; and on the ſame principles we muſt go on to ſay, that the mind itſelf and its operations are juſt what they appear to every one's reflexion, and that it is not poſſible for us to miſtake in thinking of what we have formerly done or thought, or what we ſhall hereafter do or think. But ſurely, that philoſophy cannot be very inviting, which thus explodes all independent truth and reality, reſolves knowledge into particular modifications of ſenſe and imagination, and makes theſe the meaſures of all things *.

The foregoing obſervations will receive farther light, from attending the following example

* Man the meaſure of all things, (παντων χρηματων μετρον ανθρωπον—μετρον εκαστον ημων ειναι των τε οντων και μη.—τα φαινομενα εκαστω, ταυτα και εινα.ι. *Plat. Theæt.*) was a favourite maxim with *Protagoras*; by which he meant, that every thing *was* that, and no other, which to every one it *ſeemed* to be; and that there could be nothing true, nothing real, except from the mind's own fancies or perceptions.

example of the ſtock of knowledge and new ideas, which the underſtanding may derive from *one* object of contemplation.

Let us ſuppoſe a being to have preſented to his obſervation any particular portion, (a cubic inch, for inſtance) of matter. If all intelligence is wanting, he will ſtick for ever in the individual ſenſible object, and proceed to nothing beyond what it immediately preſents to him. But add *intelligence*, and then let us obſerve what follows.

Firſt, there will appear the ideas of *entity*, *poſſibility*, and *actual exiſtence*. Every perception being the perception of ſomething, implies ſome kind of *reality* diſtinct from and independent of itſelf; nothing being more groſsly abſurd, than to ſuppoſe the perception, or apprehenſion of a thing, to be the ſame with the thing itſelf. It would be as good ſenſe to ſuppoſe examination, the ſame with the ſubject examined; the eye, the ſame with viſible objects; memory, the ſame with the fact remembered; or deſire, the ſame with the object deſired. And yet this abſurdity ſeems to be the *foundation* of a ſyſtem of ſcepticiſm which has been lately taught the world.

But

But not to dwell on this. In every idea alſo is implied the *poſſibility* of the *actual exiſtence* of its object; nothing being clearer, than that there can be no idea of an *impoſſibility*, or conception of what *cannot* exiſt. Theſe are evident intuitions of the intellectual faculty; to which it is unavoidably led by every object of its contemplation *.

We may next, obſerve that the *poſſibility* of the exiſtence of matter implies the *actual* exiſtence of *ſpace*, without preſuppoſing which, it could not be *poſſible*, nor could there be any idea of it. And the diſcernment we have of this *poſſibility*, as neceſſary and inſeparable from the idea of matter, is nothing elſe than the diſcernment of the *neceſſary actual* exiſtence of ſpace. The idea of ſpace once obtained, we perceive the *Infinity* of it, as before repreſented.—From the idea of matter, we are in the ſame manner informed of the *neceſſary exiſtence* of *Duration*.

Again; by farther examining the above-ſuppoſed portion of matter, we ſhall find that we can conceive, without a contradic-

* See note A in the Appendix.

tradiction, of one part of it as in one place, and another in another, and that conſequently it is *diviſible*. For the ſame reaſon it will appear, that this diviſion may be carried on; and that an intelligent mind can penetrate ſo far beyond all the boundaries of imagination, as to perceive certainly, that no end can be put to this diviſion, or that matter is *infinitely* diviſible *;

From the ſame ſource it may farther gain the ideas of *cauſe*, and *effect*, and *connexion*. For let it conceive of two of the divided parts as moving in a direct line towards one another, and then conſider what would follow. As it cannot conceive them to paſs through one another, it would unavoidably determine, that *contact* and *impulſe* will follow; and, as *neceſſarily connected* with theſe, ſome *alteration* in the motions of the conflicting bodies.—By what criterion can that perſon judge of what is true or falſe; and why will he refuſe his aſſent to any abſurdity that can be propoſed to him, who finds no difficulty in conceiving, that two bodies may *penetrate* one another; or move towards

* See note B in the Appendix.

towards one another, without meeting and impelling; or impel one another, without any *effect*, or any new modification of motion?

But not only would the mind thus perceive *cauſation* and *neceſſary connexion*, but, from any ſuppoſed direction and *momentum* of the moving bodies before impulſe, it might foretel the preciſe change of direction and *momentum* that would be produced by it; and go on to determine *a priori*, and without the poſſibility of error, all the laws and effects of the colliſion of bodies, of the diviſion and compoſition of motions, and of the reſiſtance of fluids and centripetal forces, as they have been inveſtigated by natural philoſophers.

Nothing need be ſaid to ſhew, that, from the ſame foundation laid, the mind would gain the ideas of *number* and *proportion*, and *lines* and *figures*; and might proceed to *arithmetic*, *geometry*, and all the different branches of *mathematics*.—It might, in ſhort, from this ſingle ſubject of enquiry, learn not only the elements and principles, but the main part of the whole body of ſcience.—Such is the fecundity of reaſon, and ſo great is the in-

jury

jury done to it, by confining it within the narrow limits of *ſenſe*, *fancy*, or *experience* *.

When

* And ſo falſe is that maxim of the ſchools; *Nil eſt in intellectu quod non prius fuit in ſenſu.*—One inſtance of what is here obſerved, not directly to the purpoſe, but worth notice by the way, is the caſe mentioned by Mr. Locke of the man ſuppoſed to be born blind, reſtored to his ſight, and required to diſtinguiſh between a globe and cube ſet before him, without feeling them. Mr. Locke has, in my opinion, certainly decided wrong in this inſtance. That ſuch a perſon would not be able readily or immediately to ſay, which was one, or which the other, I acknowledge; but it ſeems certain, that he might, with the help of a little reflexion. For, inſtead of the globe or cube, let the objects propoſed to him be a *ſquare* and a *rectangular parallelogram* of unequal ſides. To both ſenſes the ſides of the one would appear equal, and of the other unequal: Where therefore could be the difficulty of his determining, that what he ſaw with *equal* ſides was the ſquare, and with *unequal* the oblong? Could he poſſibly ſuſpect, that ſeeing was ſo fallacious a ſenſe as to repreſent as equal, the moſt unequal things, or as *one*, the greateſt *number* of things; and *vice verſa?* In the ſame manner, he might diſtinguiſh between a ſquare and a circle, and therefore between a globe and a cube, and, in various other inſtances, determine how what he *ſaw*, would *feel*, antecedently to experience.—He might alſo be enabled to diſtinguiſh between the globe and cube; and, in general, between one angle and figure, and another, by conſidering the different alterations of direction which a body muſt receive

× But this [illegible] Locke meant, but I underſtand that the [illegible]

When I conſider theſe things, I cannot help wondering, that, in enquiring into the origin of our ideas, the underſtanding, which, though not firſt in time, is the moſt important ſource of our ideas, ſhould have been overlooked. It has, indeed, been always conſidered, as, the ſource of *knowledge*: But it ſhould have been more attended to, that as the ſource of knowledge, it is likewiſe the ſource of new ideas, and that it cannot be one of theſe without being the other. The various kinds of *agreement* and *diſagreement* between our ideas, which Mr. Locke ſays, it is its office to diſcover and trace, are ſo many new ſimple ideas, obtained by its diſcernment. Thus; when it conſiders the two angles made by a right

ceive in moving along their *peripherys*, as they appeared to his ſight, and comparing this with what he beforehand knew by feeling. Thus might judgment, in ſuch inſtances, ſupply the want of experience and ſenſation; as in numberleſs other inſtances, it *corrects* ſenſation, and is ſubſtituted for it.

At the time of the firſt publication of this work, I did not know that Mr. *Locke*'s deciſion in this caſe had been ever queſtioned. But I have ſince found that it had been long before particularly confuted by Dr. Smith in his Treatiſe on *Opticks*.

line, ſtanding in any direction on another, and perceives the *agreement* between them and two right angles; what is this *agreement* beſides their *equality?* And is not the idea of this *equality* a new ſimple idea, acquired by the underſtanding, wholly different from that of the two angles compared, and denoting ſelf-evident truth?—In much the ſame manner in other caſes, knowledge and intuition ſuppoſe ſomewhat perceived in their objects, denoting ſimple ideas to which themſelves gave riſe.—This is true of our ideas of *proportion*; of our ideas of *identity* and *diverſity*, *exiſtence*, *connexion*, *cauſe* and *effect*, *power*, *poſſibility* and *impoſſibility*; and let me add, though prematurely, of our ideas or moral *right* and *wrong*. The firſt concerns *quantity*; the laſt *actions*; the reſt *all things* They comprehend the moſt conſiderable part of what we can deſire to *know* of things, and are the objects of almoſt all reaſonings and diſquiſitions *.

In

* We find *Socrates*, to the like effect, in *Thætet.* (after obſerving, that it cannot be any of the powers of ſenſe that compares the perceptions of all the ſenſes, and apprehends the general affections of things, and parti-

In ſhort. As bodily ſight diſcovers to us *viſible* objects; ſo does the underſtanding, (the eye of the mind, and infinitely more penetrating) diſcover to us *intelligible* ob-

particularly *identity*, *number*, *ſimilitude*, *diſſimilitude*, *equality*, *inequality*, to which he adds, καλον και αιχρον.) aſſerting, that this power is *reaſon*, or the ſoul acting by itſelf ſeparately from matter, and independently of any corporeal impreſſions or paſſions; and that, conſequently, in oppoſition to *Protagoras*, *knowledge* is not to be ſought for in *ſenſe*, but in this ſuperior part of the ſoul. Μοι δοκει—ουδ' ειναι τοιουτον ουδεν τουτοις οργανον ιδιον, αλλ' αυτη δι αυτης ἡ ψυχη τα κοινα μοι φαινεται περι παντων επισκοπειν——ὁμως δε τοσουτον γε προβεβηκαμεν, ὡστε μη ζητειν αυτην (επιστημην) εν αισθησει το παραπαν. αλλ' εν εκεινῳ των ονοματι ὁτι ποτ' εχει ἡ ψυχη ὁταν αυτη καθ' αυτην πραγματευηται περι TA ONTA. "It "ſeems to me, that for the perception of theſe things, "a different organ or faculty is not appointed; but "that the ſoul itſelf, and in virtue of its own power, "obſerves theſe general affections of all things.—So "far we have advanced, as to find, that *knowledge* is "by no means to be ſought in *ſenſe*; but in that power "of the ſoul which it employs when within itſelf it "contemplates and ſearches out TRUTH.

"Mark," ſays Mr. *Harries*, "the order of things "according to the account of our later metaphyſicians. "Firſt, comes that huge body, the *ſenſible world*. Then "this and its attributes beget *ſenſible Ideas*. Then "out of ſenſible Ideas by a kind of lopping and prun-"ing are made ideas *intelligible*, *whether ſpecific or gene-*"*ral*. Thus, ſhould they admit that MIND was coeval

"with

jects; and thus, in a like ſenſe with bodily viſion, becomes the inlet of new ideas.—

'Tis obvious, that the ideas now meant preſuppoſe certain ſubjects of contemplation, of whoſe natures, connexions, and qualities they are perceptions. And, therefore, the diviſion of all our ſimple ideas into *original* and *ſubſequent* ones may not, perhaps, be improper. The former are conveyed to us immediately by our organs of ſenſe, and our reflexion upon our-

" with the BODY, yet till the BODY gave it ideas and " awakened its dormant powers, it could at beſt have " been nothing more than a *ſort of dead capacity*; for INNATE IDEAS it could not poſſibly have any.—At " another time we hear of bodies ſo exceedingly fine, " that their very *exility* makes them ſuſceptible of *ſenſation* and knowledge, as if they ſhrunk into intellect " by their exquiſite ſubtlety, which rendered them too " delicate to be bodies any longer, &c."

" But the *intellectual* ſcheme, which never forgets " Deity, poſtpones every thing *corporeal* to the *primary* " *mental Cauſe*. 'Tis here it looks for the origin of " *intelligible* ideas, even of thoſe which exiſt in human " capacities. For though *ſenſible* objects may be the " deſtined medium to awaken the dormant energies of " man's underſtanding, yet are thoſe energies themſelves no more contained in *ſenſe*, than the explo- " ſion of a cannon in the ſpark which gave it fire." Vid. *Hermes*, Page 392, &c. Second Edition.

ſelves.

ſelves. The latter preſuppoſe other ideas, and ariſe from the perception of their natures and relations.—But I prefer, on ſeveral accounts, the diviſion of our ideas

Firſt, Into thoſe implying nothing real *without* the mind; that is, nothing real beſides its own affections and ſenſations. And,

Secondly, Into thoſe which denote ſomething diſtinct from ſenſation; and imply real and independent exiſtence and truth.

Each of theſe claſſes may be again ſubdivided: The *Firſt*, Into thoſe that denote the immediate effects of impreſſions on the bodily ſenſes without ſuppoſing any previous ideas, as all taſtes, ſmells, colours, &c. and thoſe that ariſe upon occaſion only of other ideas; as the effects in us of conſidering order, happineſs, and the beauties of poetry, ſculpture, painting, &c.

The *ſecond* claſs may be ſubdivided into ſuch as denote the real properties of external objects, and the actions and paſſions of the mind: And thoſe, which I have deſcribed as derived immediately from intelligence. By the notices conveyed to the mind through the organs of the body, or its obſervation of the neceſſary attendants and concomitants of certain ſenſations and impreſſions, it per-

ceives the figure, extenſion, motion, and other primary qualities of *material* ſubſtances. By contemplating itſelf, it perceives the properties of *ſpiritual* ſubſtances, volition, conſciouſneſs, memory, &c. To all theſe ideas, it is eſſential that they have invariable archetypes actually exiſting, to which they are referred and ſuppoſed to be conformable *.

After the mind, from whatever poſſible cauſes, has been furniſhed with ideas of any objects, they become themſelves objects to our intellective faculty; from whence ariſes a new ſet of ideas, which are the perceptions of this faculty. Previouſly to this, whatever ideas we may be furniſhed with, nothing is *underſtood* †. Whatever ſubjects of

* It is a very juſt obſervation of Dr. *Hutcheſon*'s, that extenſion, figure, motion, and reſt, are more properly ideas *accompanying* the ſenſations of ſight and touch, than ſenſations of either of theſe ſenſes. See *Treatiſe on the Paſſions*, Sect. 1.

† It would, I believe, be beſt never to give the name of *ideas* to ſenſations themſelves any more than to actual volitions or deſires; but to confine this word to the mind's *conception* or *notice* of any object. An idea would thus always imply ſomething diſtinct from itſelf which is its object; and the proper diviſion of our ideas would be,

of knowlege there may be in the mind, nothing is *known*.

be, according to their different objects, into those whose objects are matter and spirit and their qualities, the general affections of all things, and necessary truth.

It should be observed that I have all along endeavoured to avoid speaking of an idea as an *image* in the mind of the object we think of. It is difficult not to fall sometimes into language of this kind; but it may be misunderstood. A writer of deep reflexion has charged it with laying the foundation of all modern scepticism. Vid. *An inquiry into the human mind on the principles of common sense*, by Dr. *Reid*.

In short. There are three senses in which the word *idea* has been used, and which it is necessary to distinguish.—It has been used to signify sensation itself. Thus tastes, sounds and colours are often called ideas. But this is using the word very unwarrantably—It is also used to signify the mind's conception or apprehension of any object. This, I think, is its most just and proper sense—It is further used to signify the *immediate* object of the mind in thinking. This sense of an idea is derived from the notion that when we think of any object, there is something *immediately* present to the mind which it perceives and contemplates. But what is this?—Shall we call it a *representation* or *image* of the object? This, I think is improper language—Must we then deny the existence of an *immediate* object of the mind in thinking? When an abstract truth is contemplated, is not the very object itself present to the mind? When millions of intellects contemplate the equality of every angle

Of all the different kinds of ideas now mentioned, brutes ſeem poſſeſs'd chiefly, if not ſolely, of thoſe derived from the external ſenſes. They think, and will, and remember; but are not capable of making theſe the objects of a reflex act, ſo as to obtain ideas of them. They may hear all the ſounds in muſic, and ſee all the lines and colours in a picture; but they perceive not harmony, or beauty. All the ideas, therefore, founded on inward reflexion, on a previous aſſemblage and compariſon of ideas, and on *intelligence*, ſeem, in a great meaſure, peculiar to ourſelves.

It is an obſervation very neceſſary to be made, before we leave what we are now upon, that the ſource of ideas on which I have inſiſted, is different from the power of *reaſoning*, and ought, by no means, to be confounded with it. This conſiſts in inveſtigating certain relations between objects, ideas of which muſt have been previouſly in the mind: that is; it ſuppoſes us

angle in a ſemicircle to a right angle, have they not all the ſame object in view? Is this object *nothing?* See more on this ſubject in note C in the Appendix.

already

already to have the ideas we want to trace; and therefore cannot give rise to new ideas. No mind can be engaged in investigating it knows not what; or in endeavouring to find out any thing concerning an object, of which it has no conception. When, from the view of objects to which they belong self-evidently, we have gained ideas of proportion, identity, connexion, &c. we employ deduction, or reasoning, to trace these amongst other objects, and in other instances, where they cannot be perceived immediately.

SECT. III.

Of the Origin of our Ideas of moral Right and Wrong.

LET us now return to our first enquiry, and apply the foregoing observations to our ideas of *right* and *wrong* in particular.

'Tis a very necessary previous observation, that our ideas of *right* and *wrong* are simple ideas, and must therefore be ascribed to some power

power of *immediate* perception in the human mind. He that doubts this, need only try to give definitions of them, which ſhall amount to more than ſynonymous expreſſions. Moſt of the confuſion in which the queſtion concerning the foundation of morals has been involved has proceeded from inatention to this remark. There are, undoubtedly, ſome actions that are *ultimately* approved, and for juſtifying which no reaſon can be aſſigned; as there are ſome ends, which are *ultimately* deſired, and for chuſing which no reaſon can be given. Were not this true; there would be an infinite progreſſion of reaſons and ends, and therefore nothing could be at all approved or deſired.

Suppoſing then, that we have a power *immediately* perceiving right and wrong: the point I am now to endeavour to prove, is, that this power is the *Underſtanding*, agreeably to the aſſertion at the end of the *firſt* ſection. I cannot but flatter myſelf, that the main obſtacle to the acknowledgment of this, has been already removed, by the obſervations made in the preceding ſection, to ſhew that the underſtanding is a power of immediate perception, which gives

riſe

riſe to new original ideas; nor do I think it poſſible that there ſhould have been many diſputes on this ſubject had this been properly conſidered.

But, in order more explicitly and diſtinctly to evince what I have aſſerted (in the only way the nature of the queſtion ſeems capable of) let me,

Firſt, Obſerve, that it implies no abſurdity, but evidently *may* be true. It is undeniable, that many of our ideas are derived from our INTUITION of truth, or the diſcernment of the natures of things by the underſtanding. This therefore *may* be the ſource of our moral ideas. It is at leaſt *poſſible*, that *right* and *wrong* may denote what we *underſtand* and *know* concerning certain objects, in like manner with proportion and diſproportion, connexion and repugnancy, contingency and neceſſity, and the other ideas before-mentioned.—I will add, that nothing has been offered which has any tendency to prove the contrary. All that can appear, from the objections and reaſonings of the Author of the *Enquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue*, is only, what has been already obſerved,

obſerved, and what does not in the leaſt affect the point in debate: Namely, that the words *right* and *wrong*, *fit* and *unfit*, expreſs ſimple and undeniable ideas. But that the power perceiving them is properly a *ſenſe* and not *reaſon*; that theſe ideas denote nothing *true* of actions, nothing in the *nature* of actions; this, he has left entirely without proof. He appears, indeed, to have taken for granted, that if virtue and vice are *immediately* perceived, they muſt be perceptions of an *implanted* ſenſe. But no concluſion could have been more haſty. For will any one take upon him to ſay, that all powers of immediate perception muſt be arbitrary and implanted; or that there can be no ſimple ideas denoting any thing beſides the qualities and paſſions of the mind?—In ſhort. Whatever ſome writers have ſaid to the contrary, it is certainly, a point not yet decided, that virtue is wholly factitious, and to be *felt* not *underſtood*.

As there are ſome propoſitions, which, when attended to, neceſſarily determine all minds to *believe* them: And as (which will be ſhewn hereafter) there are ſome ends, whoſe natures are ſuch, that, when perceived, all beings immediately and neceſſarily

rily *desire* them: So is it very credible, that, in like manner, there are some actions whose natures are such, that, when observed, all rational beings immediately and necessarily *approve* them.

I do not at all care what follows from Mr. *Hume*'s assertion, that all our ideas are either *impressions, or* * *copies of impressions*; *or* from Mr *Locke*'s assertion that they are all *deducible from* SENSATION *and* REFLEXION.—The first of these assertions is, I think, destitute of all proof; supposes, when applied in this as well as many other cases, the point in question; and, when pursued to its consequences, ends in the destruction of all truth and the subversion of our intellectual faculties.—The other wants much explication to render it consistent with any tolerable account of the original of our moral ideas: Nor does there seem to be any thing necessary to convince a person, that all our ideas are not deducible from sensation and reflexion, except taken in a very large and comprehensive sense, besides considering how Mr. *Locke* derives from them our *moral*

* See *Mr. Hume's Treatise of Human Nature*, and *Philosophical Essays*.

ideas

ideas. He places them among our ideas of relations, and repreſents *rectitude* as ſignifying the conformity of actions to ſome rules or laws; which rules or laws, he ſays, are either *the will of God*, the *decrees of the magiſtrate, or the faſhion of the country*: From whence it follows, that it is an abſurdity to apply *rectitude* to rules and laws themſelves; to ſuppoſe the *divine* will to be directed by it; or to conſider it as *itſelf* a rule and law. But, it is undoubted, that this great man would have deteſted theſe conſequences; and, indeed, it is ſufficiently evident, that he was ſtrangely embarraſſed in his notions on this, as well as ſome other ſubjects. But,

Secondly, I know of no better way of determining this point, than by referring thoſe who doubt about it to common ſenſe, *and* putting them upon conſidering the nature of their own perceptions.—Could we ſuppoſe a perſon, who, when he perceived an external object, was at a loſs to determine whether he perceived it by means of his organs of ſight or touch; what better method could be taken to ſatisfy him? There is no poſſibility of doubting in any ſuch caſes. And

And it ſeems not more difficult to determine in the preſent caſe.

Were the queſtion; what that perception is, which we have of number, diverſity, cauſation or proportion; and whether our ideas of them ſignify truth and reality perceived by the underſtanding, or impreſſions made by the objects to which we aſcribe them, on our minds; were, I ſay, this the queſtion; would it not be ſufficient to appeal to every man's conſciouſneſs?—Theſe perceptions ſeem to me to have no greater pretence to be denominated perceptions of the underſtanding, than *right* and *wrong*.

It is true, ſome impreſſions of pleaſure or pain, ſatisfaction or diſguſt, generally attend our perceptions of virtue and vice. But theſe are merely their effects and concomitants, and not the perceptions themſelves, which ought no more to be confounded with them, than a particular truth (like that for which *Pythagoras* offered a Hecatomb) ought to be confounded with the pleaſure that may attend the diſcovery of it. Some emotion or other accompanies, perhaps, all our perceptions; but more remarkably our perceptions of right and wrong. And this,

as

as will be again obſerved in the next chapter, is what has led to the miſtake of making them to ſignify nothing but impreſſions, which error ſome have extended to all objects of knowledge; and thus have been led into an extravagant and monſtrous ſcepticiſm.

But to return; let any one compare the ideas ariſing from our *powers of ſenſation*, with thoſe ariſing from our *intuition of the natures of things*, and enquire which of them his ideas of right and wrong moſt reſemble. On the iſſue of ſuch a compariſon may we ſafely reſt this queſtion. It is ſcarcely conceiveable that any one can impartially attend to the nature of his own perceptions, and determine that, when he thinks gratitude or beneficence to be *right*, he perceives nothing *true* of them, and *underſtands* nothing, but only receives an impreſſion from a *ſenſe*. Was it poſſible for a perſon to queſtion, whether his idea of *equality* was gained from ſenſe or intelligence; he might ſoon be convinced, by conſidering, whether he is not ſure, that certain lines or figures are *really* equal, and that their equality muſt be perceived by all minds, as ſoon as the objects themſelves are perceived.—In the ſame man-

manner may we ſatisfy ourſelves concerning the origin of the idea of *right*: For have we not a like conſciouſneſs, that we diſcern the one, as well as the other, *in* certain objects? Upon what poſſible grounds can we pronounce the one to be *ſenſe*, and the other *reaſon*? Would not a Being purely intelligent, having happineſs within his reach, *approve* of ſecuring it for himſelf? Would not he *think* this right; and would it not *be* right? When we contemplate the happineſs of a ſpecies, or of a world, and pronounce concerning the actions of reaſonable beings which promote it, that they are *right*; is this judging erroneouſly? Or is it no determination of judgment at all, but a ſpecies of mental taſte?—Are not ſuch actions *really right*? Or is every apprehenſion of rectitude in them falſe and deluſive, juſt as the like apprehenſion is concerning the effects of external and internal ſenſation, when taken to belong to the cauſes producing them?

It ſeems beyond contradiction certain, that every being muſt *deſire* happineſs for himſelf; and can thoſe natures of things, from which the *deſire* of happineſs and *averſion* to miſery neceſſarily ariſe, leave, at

the ſame time, a rational nature totally indifferent as to any *approbation* of actions procuring the one, or preventing the other? Is there nothing that any *underſtanding* can perceive to be amiſs in a creature's bringing upon himſelf, or others, calamities and ruin? Is there nothing truly wrong in the abſolute and eternal miſery of an innocent being? — "It *appears* wrong to us." — And what reaſon can you have for doubting, whether it appears what *it is?* — Should a being, after being flattered with hopes of bliſs, and having his expectations raiſed by encouragements and promiſes, find himſelf, without reaſon, plunged into irretrievable torments; would he not *juſtly* complain? Would he want a *ſenſe* to cauſe the idea of *wrong* to ariſe in his mind?— Can goodneſs, gratitude, and veracity, appear to any mind under the ſame characters, with cruelty, ingratitude, and treachery?—Darkneſs may as ſoon appear to be light.

It would, I doubt, be to little purpoſe to plead further here, the natural and univerſal apprehenſions of mankind, that our ideas of right and wrong belong to the underſtanding,

ſtanding, and denote real characters of actions; becauſe it will be eaſy to reply, that they have a like opinion of the *ſenſible qualities* of bodies; and that nothing is more common than for men to miſtake their own ſenſations for the properties of the objects producing them, or to apply to the object itſelf, what they find always accompanying it, whenever obſerved. Let it therefore be obſerved,

Thirdly, That if right and wrong denote effects of ſenſation, it muſt imply the greateſt abſurdity to ſuppoſe them applicable to actions: That is; the ideas of *right* and *wrong* and of *action*, muſt in this caſe be imcompatible; as much ſo, as the idea of pleaſure and a regular form, or of pain and the colliſions of bodies.—All ſenſations, as ſuch, are modes of conſciouſneſs, or feelings of a ſentient being, which muſt be of a nature totally different from the particular cauſes which produce them. A *coloured body*, if we ſpeak accurately, is the ſame abſurdity with a *ſquare ſound*. We need no experiments to prove that heat, cold, colours, taſtes, &c. are not real qualities of bodies; becauſe the ideas of matter and of

theſe qualities, are incompatible *.—But is there indeed any ſuch incompatibility between *actions* and *right?* Or any ſuch abſurdity in affirming the one of the other?—Are the ideas of them as different as the idea of a ſenſation, and its cauſe?

* It is chiefly from hence; from our own ideas, and the reaſon of the thing; from the *unintelligibleneſs* of colour and other ſecondary qualities, when conſidered as modifications of matter, or from the repugnancy to coexiſtence in the ſame ſubject which we perceive between theſe qualities and ſolid extenſion; that we conclude they are not properties of matter, but different effects produced in our minds by the action of matter upon them. Moſt of the facts alledged in confirmation of this, are in themſelves no ſufficient proofs of it, becauſe equally applicable, as may be eaſily ſeen, to the real and primary qualities of matter.—It is a remark, I know not how to forbear adding; that, ſenſible qualities being univerſally allowed not to be qualities inherent in matter; it is ſtrange, that any perſons ſhould not allow the ſame to be equally evident with reſpect to thought and conſciouſneſs. Is the notion of *conſcious, thinking, reaſonable matter*, leſs abſurd than that of *white* or *red matter?* Is there leſs repugnancy between the ideas? Is it leſs plain, that figure, ſolidity, magnitude, motion, and juxta poſition of parts are not, and cannot be deſire, volition, and judgment; than it is that they cannot be cold or four, or that any one thing is not and cannot be another?

On

On the contrary; the more we enquire, the more indiſputable, I imagine, it will appear to us, that we expreſs neceſſary truth, when we ſay of ſome actions, they are right; and of others, they are wrong. Some of the moſt careful enquirers think thus, and find it out of their power not to be perſuaded that theſe are real diſtinctions belonging to the natures of actions. Can it be ſo difficult, to diſtinguiſh between the ideas of ſenſibility and reaſon; between the *intuitions of truth* and the *paſſions of the mind?* Is that a ſcheme of morals we can be very fond of, which makes our perceptions of moral good and evil in actions and manners, to be all viſion and fancy? Who can help ſeeing, that right and wrong are as abſolutely unintelligible, and void of ſenſe and meaning, when ſuppoſed to ſignify nothing true of actions, no eſſential, inherent difference between them; as the perceptions of the external and internal ſenſes are, when thought to be properties of the objects that produce them?

How ſtrange would it be to maintain, that there is no poſſibility of *miſtaking* with

reſpect to right and wrong * ; that the apprehenſions of all beings, on this ſubject, are alike juſt, ſince all ſenſation muſt be alike *true* ſenſation ?—Is there a greater abſurdity, than to ſuppoſe, that the *moral rectitude* of an action is nothing abſolute and unvarying ; but capable, like all the modifications of pleaſure and pain, of being intended and remitted, of increaſing and leſſening, of riſing and ſinking with the force and livelineſs of our feelings ? Would it be leſs ridiculous to ſuppoſe this of the relations between given quantities, of the equality of numbers, or the figure of bodies ?

In the laſt place ; let it be conſidered, that all actions, undoubtedly, have a *nature*. That is, *ſome character* certainly belongs to them, and ſomewhat there is to be *truly* affirmed of them. This may be, that ſome of them are right, others wrong. But if this is not allowed ; if no actions are, *in themſelves*, either right or wrong, or any thing of a moral and obligatory nature,

* It will be obſerved preſently, that the antient ſceptics aſſerted univerſally there could be no ſuch thing as *error* ; and for the very reaſon here aſſigned.

which

which can be an object to the understanding; it follows, that, in themselves, they *are* all indifferent. This is what is essentially true of them, and this is what all understandings, that perceive right, must perceive them to be. But are we not conscious, that we perceive the contrary? And have we not as much reason to believe the contrary, as to believe or trust at all our own discernment?

In other words; every thing having a *nature* or *essence*, from whence such and such truths concerning it necessarily result, and which it is the proper province of the understanding to perceive; it follows, that nothing whatever can be exempted from its inspection and sentence, and that of every thought, sentiment, and subject, it is the natural and ultimate judge. *Actions*, therefore, *ends* and *events* are within its province. Of these, as well as all other objects, it belongs to it to judge.—What is this judgment?—One would think it impossible for any person, without some hesitation and reluctance, to reply; that the judgment he forms of them is this; that they are all essentially *indifferent*, and that there is no one thing fitter to be done than another. If

this judging truly; how obvious is it to infer, that it ſignifies not what we do; and that the determination to think otherwiſe, is an impoſition upon rational creatures. Why then ſhould they not labour to ſuppreſs in themſelves this determination, and to extirpate from their natures all the deluſive ideas of morality, worth, and virtue? What though the ruin of the world ſhould follow? —There would be nothing *really* wrong in this.

A rational agent void of all moral judgment, incapable of perceiving a difference, in reſpect of fitneſs and unfitneſs to be performed, between actions, and acting from blind propenſions without any ſentiments concerning what he does, is not poſſible to be imagined. And, do what we will, we ſhall find it out of our power, in earneſt to perſuade ourſelves, that reaſon can have no concern in judging of and directing our conduct; or to exclude from our minds all notions of right and wrong in actions.

But what deſerves particular conſideration here is this. If all actions and all diſpoſitions of beings are *in themſelves indifferent*, the all-perfect underſtanding of the

the Deity, without doubt, perceives this; and therefore he cannot *approve*, or *disapprove* of any of his own actions, or of the actions of his creatures: The end he purſues, and the manner in which he treats his creatures muſt appear to him what it *is—indifferent*. What foundation then is left for his moral perfections? How can we conceive him to purſue univerſal happineſs as his end, when, at the ſame time, we ſuppoſe nothing *in* the nature of that end to engage the choice of any being? Is it no diminution of his perfect character, to ſuppoſe him guided by mere unintelligent inclination, without any direction from reaſon, or any *moral approbation?*

In ſhort; it ſeems ſufficient to overthrow any ſcheme, that ſuch conſequences, as the following, ſhould ariſe from it:—That no one being can judge one end to be better than another, or believe a real moral difference between actions; without giving his aſſent to an impoſſibility; without miſtaking the *affections of his own mind* for *truth*, and *ſenſation* for *knowledge*.—That there being nothing intrinſically proper or improper,

per, juſt or unjuſt; there is nothing *obligatory* *; but all beings enjoy, from the reaſons of things and the nature of actions, liberty to act as they will.

The following important corollary ariſes from theſe arguments:

That morality is *eternal and immutable*.

Right and wrong, it appears, denote what actions *are*. Now whatever any thing *is*, that it is, not by will, or decree, or power, but by *nature and neceſſity*. Whatever a triangle or circle is, that it is unchangeably and eternally. It depends upon no will or power, whether the three angles of a triangle and two right ones ſhall be *equal*; whether the periphery of a circle and its diameter ſhall be *incommenſurable*; or whether matter ſhall be *diviſible*, *moveable*, *paſſive*, and *inert*. Every object of the underſtanding has an indiviſible and invariable

* Moral right and wrong, and moral obligation or duty, muſt remain, or vaniſh together. They neceſſarily accompany one another, and make but as it were one idea. As far as the former are fictitious and imaginary, the latter muſt be ſo too. This connexion or coincidence between moral rectitude and obligation, will be at large conſidered hereafter.

eſſence;

eſſence; from whence ariſe its properties, and numberleſs truths concerning it. Omnipotence does not conſiſt in a power to alter the nature of things, and to deſtroy neceſſary truth (for this is contradictory, and would infer the deſtruction of all wiſdom, and knowledge) but in an abſolute command over all *particular*, *external* exiſtences, to create or deſtroy them, or produce any poſſible changes among them.—The natures of things then being immutable; whatever we ſuppoſe the natures of actions to be, they muſt be immutably. If they are indifferent, this indifference is itſelf immutable, and there neither is nor can be any one thing that, *in reality*, we *ought* to do rather than another. The ſame is to be ſaid of right and wrong, of moral good and evil, as far as they expreſs *real characters* of actions. They, muſt immutably and neceſſarily belong to thoſe actions of which they are *truly* affirmed.

No will, therefore, can render *any thing* good and obligatory, which was not ſo antecedently, and from eternity; or any action right, that is not ſo in itſelf; meaning by *action*, not the bare external effect produced, but the ultimate principle of conduct,

duct, or the determination of a reasonable being, considered as arising from the perception of some motives and reasons and intended for some end. According to this sense of the word *action*, whenever the principle from which we act is different, the action is different, though the external effects produced, may be the same. If we attend to this, the meaning and truth of what I have just observed, will be easily seen.—Put the case of any action, the performance of which is *indifferent*, or attended with no circumstances of the agent that render it better or fitter to be done than omitted. Is it not plain that, *while all things continue the same*, it is as impossible for any will or power to make acting obligatory here, as it is for them to make two equal things unequal without producing any change in either? It is true, the doing of any indifferent thing may become obligatory, in consequence of a command from a being possessed of rightful authority over us: But it is obvious, that in this case, the command produces a change in the circumstances of the agent, and that what, in consequence of it, becomes obligatory, is not the same with what *before* was indifferent. The external effect, that is, the

matter

matter of the action is indeed the ſame; but nothing is plainer, than that actions in this ſenſe the ſame, may in a moral view be totally different according to the ends aimed at by them, and the principles of morality under which they fall.

When an action, otherwiſe indifferent, becomes obligatory, by being made the ſubject of a *promiſe*; we are not to imagine, that our own will or breath alters the nature of things by making what is indifferent not ſo. But what was indifferent *before* the promiſe is ſtill ſo; and it cannot be ſuppoſed, that, *after* the promiſe, it becomes obligatory, without a contradiction. All that the promiſe does, is, to alter the connexion of a particular effect; or to cauſe that to be an *inſtance* of right conduct which was not ſo before. There are no effects producible by us, which may not, in this manner, fall under different principles of morality; acquire connexions ſometimes with happineſs, and ſometimes with miſery; and thus ſtand in different relations to the eternal rules of duty.

The objection, therefore, to what is here aſſerted, taken from the effects of poſitive laws and promiſes, has no weight. It appears,

pears, that when an obligation to particular indifferent actions ariſes from the command of the Deity, or poſitive laws; it is by no means to be inferred from hence, that obligation is the creature of will, or that the nature of what is indifferent is changed: nothing then becoming obligatory, which was not ſo from eternity; that is, *obeying the divine will, and juſt authority.* And had there been nothing right in this, had there been no reaſon from the natures of things for obeying God's will; it is certain, it could have induced no obligation, nor at all influenced an intellectual nature as ſuch.—Will and laws ſignify nothing, abſtracted from ſomething previous to them, in the character of the law-giver and the relations of beings to one another, to give them force and render diſobedience a crime. If mere will ever obliged, what reaſon can be given, why the will of one being ſhould oblige, and of another not; why it ſhould not oblige alike to every thing it requires; and why there ſhould be any difference between *power* and *authority*. It is truth and reaſon, then, that, in all caſes, oblige, and not mere will. So far, we ſee, is it from being poſſible, that any will or laws ſhould *create* right; that they

they can have no effect, but in virtue of natural and antecedent right.

Thus, then, is morality fixed on an immoveable *baſis*, and appears not to be, in any ſenſe, *factitious*; or the *arbitrary production* of any power human or divine; but *equally everlaſting* and *neceſſary* with all *truth* and *reaſon*. And this we find to be as evident, as that right and wrong ſignify a *reality* * in what is ſo denominated.

I ſhall conclude this chapter, with obſerving; that the opinion of thoſe, who maintain that our ideas of morality are derived from ſenſe, is far from being entirely modern. There were among the antients, philoſophers, (*Protagoras*, in particular, and his followers) who entertained a like opinion; but extended it much further; that is, to *all ſcience*; denied all abſolute and immutable truth; and aſſerted every thing to be relative to perception. And indeed it ſeems not a very unnatural tranſition, from denying abſolute *moral* truth, to denying *all truth*; from making right and wrong,

* Ου γαρ εχω εγωγε ειδεν ετω μοι εναργες ον, ὡς, τουτο, το ΕΙΝΑΙ ὡς οιον τε μαλιστα καλον τε και αγαθον. *Plat. in Phæd.* Sect. 18.

juſt

juſt and unjuſt, dependent on perception, to aſſerting the ſame of whatever we commonly rank among the objects of the underſtanding. Why may not he who rejects the reality of rightneſs in beneficence, and of wrong in producing needleſs miſery, be led, by the ſame ſteps, to deny the certainty of other ſelf-evident principles? Why may he not as well deny the reality, for example, of *ſtraitneſs* in a line drawn the ſhorteſt way between two points; or of aptneſs and unaptneſs, of connexion and proportion between certain objects and quantities? He that diſtruſts his reaſon in the one caſe, why ſhould he not alſo in the other? He that refers the former perceptions to a ſenſe; why ſhould he not, with the before-mentioned philoſopher, make *all knowledge to be ſenſe?*—Conſequences much worſe cannot follow from making all the principles of knowledge arbitrary and factitious, than from making morality ſo; from ſuppoſing all we perceive of the natures and relations of things, to denote modes of ſenſation in our minds, than from ſuppoſing this of the objects of our moral diſcernment. If the one overthrows *all* truth, the other overthrows that *part* of truth which is moſt important

important and intereſting. If the one deſtroys the neceſſary wiſdom and intelligence of the Deity (the very idea of a mind and of knowledge, being impoſſible, if there is nothing permanent in the nature of things, nothing *neceſſarily* true, and therefore nothing to be *known*) the other equally deſtroys his moral perfections *.

* Let us ſuppoſe an enquiry, ſimilar to that which is the ſubject of this chapter, concerning that *neceſſity* which is meant when we ſay, "that it is *neceſſary* there "ſhould be a cauſe of whatever begins to exiſt." When we ſpeak thus, do we only expreſs a *feeling* of *ſenſe*, or ſome *modification* of our own thoughts, and not a *judgment* of the *underſtanding?* Is it indeed true that there is no ſuch *neceſſity* in the natures of things?—If theſe queſtions are to be anſwered in the affirmative, there is an end of all knowledge, and we are plunged into the abyſs of atheiſm.—Modern ſcepticiſm has not ſtuck at this; and it is no inconſiderable apology for it, that in doing this, it has only extended further what ſome writers of the beſt character have contended for, with reſpect to *moral rectitude*.—While, however, men retain common ſenſe, it cannot be poſſible for ſuch opinions to gain ground. The faculty by which we diſtinguiſh between ſelf-evident truth and palpable contradiction may be puzzled by the refinements and ſubtelties of men of genius, but it muſt for ever preſerve its authority, nor can any real and laſting conviction be produced in oppoſition to it.

One argument which, it ſeems, *Protagoras* made great uſe of in maintaining his opinions, was, that colours, taſtes, and ſounds, and the other ſenſible qualities of bodies exiſt only when perceived, and therefore are not qualities inherent in bodies, but ſenſations ever-varying, begot between the ſenſible object and organ, and produced by the action of the one on the other; the ſame object, as he reaſoned, often appearing to have different qualities to different perſons; and no two perſons having exactly the ſame ideas of any one ſenſible quality of any object *. From hence, and from a notion, not very conſiſtent with it, that conſciouſneſs and underſtanding were to be reſolved into matter and motion; he concluded, that all things are in a perpetual flux †; and that nothing is true or falſe,

* This opinion was rejected by *Plato* and *Ariſtotle*; its being abuſed to ſcepticiſm and the taking away the natural diſcrimination of good and evil, begetting in the former, as Dr. *Cudworth* ſays, a prejudice againſt it. Vid. *Eternal and immutable Morality*, Chap. IV. 21.

† Εγω γαρ, και μαλ' ου φαυλου λογου, &c. "I will ſay, "(nor will it be ſaid amiſs) that nothing is any thing "in itſelf; and that we never juſtly ſay of any object, "that it *is* this or that. If we call an object great, it "appears

falſe (any more than ſweet or ſour) in itſelf, but relatively to the perceiving mind. that he applied this particularly to moral

 good

" appears alſo little; if heavy, it is alſo light; and " ſo of all objects; nothing being any one thing more " than another. But all things, of which we wrongly " ſay, that they *are*, ſpring out of motion, and the " mixture and compoſition of things with one another; " for nothing ever abſolutely *is*, but is always gene- " rated." εστι μεν γαρ ιδε ποτ' ουδεν. αει γιγνεται. Vid. *Plat.* in *Theæt.*—οια εκαστα εμοι φαινεται, τοιαυτα μεν εστ ιν εμοι· οια δε σοι τοιαυτα αυ σοι. " What a thing *appears* to me, " that it is to *me*." " What it appears to you, that " it is to *you*."—αισθησις αρα του ονΘ· αιει εστιν και αψευδης ως επιστημα ουσα. " The object of ſenſe is always truth, " nor can it deceive; for it is knowledge." *Ibid.*—— It was a controverſy much agitated among the antient philoſophers; whether all things ſtood ſtill, or whether all things flowed. *Parmenides* held the former; *Heraclitus*, and, after him, *Protagoras* and others, the latter. The meaning of this controverſy (in part at leaſt) was, whether there was or was not any thing permanent and neceſſary in the natures of things; or, " as *Ariſtotle* " declares (*Ariſt. Met.* Lib. iii. cap. 5.) whether there " were any other objects of the mind, beſides ſingular " ſenſibles, that were immutable; and, conſequently, " whether there was any ſuch thing as proper ſcience." The former denied this, and aſſerted φερομενην ουσιαν, a moveable eſſence. " The *Parmenideans* and *Pythago-* " *reans*, on the contrary, maintained, that, beſides ſin- " gular ſenſibles, there were other objects of the mind " univerſal,

good and evil, appears from ſeveral paſſages in *Plato's* * *Theætetus*, where theſe notions of *Protagoras*'s are at large explained and confuted.—He that would have a fuller view of what is here ſaid, may conſult this Dialogue of *Plato*'s, or Dr. *Cudworth*'s *Treatiſe* of *Immutable and Eternal Morality*.

Such is the agreement, in this inſtance, between the opinions of modern times and thoſe of *Socrates*'s time. Such the tendency of the account of morality I have oppoſed; and it is aſtoniſhing how far ſome, who have embraced it, have extended it to our other perceptions, and revived, perhaps even exceeded, the wildeſt doctrines of ancient

" univerſal, eternal, and immutable, which they cal-
" led the intelligible ideas, all originally contained in
" one Archetypal mind or underſtanding." Vid. *Intellectual Syſtem* by Dr. *Cudworth*, p. 387. 2d Edit.

* Λεγέ τοινυν παλιν, ει σοι αρεσκει το μητι ΕΙΝΑΙ αλλα ΓΙΓΝΕΤΑΙ αει αγαθον και καλον. *Soc.* Tell me, is it your opinion, that nothing ever *is*, but is *made* good and virtuous? αλλ' εκει ου λεγω, εν τοις δικαιοις και αδικοις, και οσιοις και ανοσιοις εθελουσιν ισχυριζεσθαι ὡς ουκ εστι φυσει αυτων ουδεν ουσιαν εαυτου εχον, αλλα το κοινη δοξαν τοτε γινεται αληθες, τοτε ὁταν δοξη, και ὁσον αν δοκη χρονον, &c. *i. e.* They more eſpecially aſſerted, that nothing is juſt or unjuſt, holy or unholy, naturally and eſſentially, but relatively to opinion or ſenſe.

ſcepticiſm.

ſcepticiſm. The *primary* as well as *ſecondary* qualities of matter, cauſe, effect, connexion, extenſion, duration, identity, and almoſt all about which knowledge is converſant, have been repreſented as only qualities of our minds: the idea confounded with its object: The *eſſe* and the *percipi* maintained to be *univerſally* the ſame; and the impoſſibility aſſerted of every thing except *impreſſions*. Thus, is there neither matter, nor morality, nor Deity, nor any kind of external exiſtence left. All our diſcoveries and boaſted knowledge vaniſh, and the whole univerſe is reduced into a creature of fancy. Every ſentiment of every being is equally juſt. Nothing being preſent to our minds beſides our own ideas, there can be no conception of any thing diſtinct from them; no beings but * ourſelves; no diſtinction between paſt

* Nor ourſelves neither; for to *exiſt*, and to *be perceived*, being the ſame, perceptions themſelves can have no exiſtence, unleſs there can be perceptions of perceptions *in infinitum*. Beſides, by this ſyſtem, the only idea of what we call *ourſelves* is the contradictory and monſtrous one of a ſeries of ſucceſſive and ſeparable perceptions, not one of which *continues*, that is, *exiſts* at all; and without any ſubſtance that perceives.—It might

and future time; no poſſibility of remembering wrong, or foreſeeing wrong. He is the wiſeſt man, who has the moſt fertile imagination, and whoſe mind is ſtored with the greateſt number of notions, their conformity to the truth of things being incapable of being queſtioned.—When ſpeculative men have proceeded to theſe lengths, or avow principles directly implying them, it becomes high time to leave them to themſelves *.

might be further remarked; that the very ſcheme that takes away the diſtinction between paſt and future, and admits of no real exiſtence independent of perception, is itſelf derived from and founded upon the ſuppoſition of the contrary; I mean, the ſuppoſition that there have been *paſt* impreſſions, of which all ideas are copies; and that certain objects have been obſerved to have been conjoined in *paſt* inſtances, and by this means produced that cuſtomary tranſition of the imagination from one of them to the other, in which *reaſoning* is ſaid to conſiſt. It would have been abuſing the reader to mention theſe extravagancies, had not ſome of them been ſtarted by Biſhop *Berkeley*; and his principles adopted and purſued to a ſyſtem of ſcepticiſm, that plainly includes them all, by another writer of the greateſt talents, to whom I have often had occaſion to refer. See *Treatiſe of Human Nature*, and *Philoſophical Eſſays*, by Mr. *Hume*.

* See Note D Appendix.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Of our Ideas of the Beauty and Deformity of Actions.

HAVING conſidered our ideas of *right* and *wrong*; I come now to conſider our ideas of *beauty*, and its contrary.

This is the *ſecond* kind of ſentiment, or perception, with reſpect to actions, which I noticed at the beginning of the preceding chapter. Little need be ſaid to ſhew, that it is different from the former. We are plainly conſcious of more than the bare diſcernment of right and wrong, or the cool judgment of reaſon concerning the natures of actions. We often ſay of ſome actions, not only that they are *right*, but that they are *amiable*; and of others, not only that they are *wrong*, but *odious* and *ſhocking*. Every one muſt ſee, that theſe epithets denote the *delight*; or on the contrary,

the *horror* and *deteſtation felt* by ourſelves; and, conſequently, ſignify not any real qualities or characters of actions, but the *effects in us,* or the particular pleaſure and pain, attending the conſideration of them.

"What then is the true account of theſe "perceptions? muſt they not ariſe entirely "from an arbitrary ſtructure of our minds, "by which certain objects, when obſerved, "are rendered the occaſions of certain ſenſations and affections? And therefore, "in this inſtance, are we not under a neceſſity of recurring to a *ſenſe?* Can there "be any connexion, except ſuch as ariſes "from implanted principles, between any "perceptions and particular modifications "of pleaſure and pain in the perceiving "mind?"

I anſwer; That there *may* be ſuch a connexion; and that I think, there *is* ſuch a connexion in many inſtances; and particularly in this inſtance.

Why or how the impreſſions made by *external objects* on our bodily organs, produce the ſenſations conſtantly attending them, it is not poſſible for us to diſcover. The ſame is true of the ſenſations and affections of mind produced by the objects of many

many of the *internal ſenſes*. In ſuch inſtances, we can conceive of no connexion between the effects in us and their apparent cauſes; and the only account we can give is, that "ſuch is our frame; ſo God has ſeen fit to "adapt our faculties and particular objects "to one another." But this is far from being true *univerſally*. There are objects which have a *natural aptitude* to pleaſe or diſpleaſe our minds. And thus in the *ſpiritual* world, the caſe is the ſame, as in the *corporeal*; where, though there are events which we cannot explain, and numberleſs cauſes and effects of which, for want of being acquainted with the inward ſtructure and conſtitution of bodies, we know no more than their exiſtence: There are alſo cauſes the manner of whoſe operation we underſtand; and events, between which we diſcern a neceſſary connexion.

One account, therefore, of the ſentiments we are examining, is; "that ſuch are the "*natures* of certain actions, that, when "perceived, there muſt reſult certain emo-"tions and affections."

That there are objects which have a natural aptitude to pleaſe or offend, and between which and the contemplating mind there

there is a neceſſary congruity or incongruity, ſeems to me unqueſtionable —For, what ſhall we ſay of ſupreme and complete excellence? Is what we mean by this only a particular kind of ſenſation; or, if ſomething real and objective, can it be contemplated without emotion? Muſt there be the aid of a ſenſe to make the character of the *Deity* appear *amiable*; or, would pure and abſtract reaſon be indifferent to it? Is there any thing more neceſſary to cauſe it to be loved and admired beſides *knowing* it? The more it is known, and the better it is underſtood, muſt it not the more delight?

Again, a reaſonable being, void of all ſuperadded determinations or ſenſes, who knows what order and happineſs are, would, I think, unavoidably, receive *pleaſure* from the ſurvey of an univerſe where perfect order prevailed; and the contrary proſpect of univerſal confuſion and miſery would *offend* him.

But his own happineſs and miſery are, undeniably, objects, which no being can contemplate with indifference. Of which in the next chapter.

What is thus true, in theſe and other inſtances, is particularly evident in the preſent caſe.

caſe. It is not indeed plainer, that, in any inſtances, there are correſpondencies and connexions of things among themſelves; or that one motion has a tendency to produce another; than it is, that virtue is naturally adapted to *pleaſe* every obſerving mind; and vice the contrary.——I cannot perceive an action to be right, without *approving* it; or *approve* it, without being conſcious of ſome degree of *ſatisfaction* and complacency. I cannot perceive an action to be wrong, without *diſapproving* it; or *diſapprove* it, without being *diſpleaſed* with it. Right actions then, as ſuch, muſt be *grateful*, and wrong ones *ungrateful* to us. The one muſt appear *amiable*, and the other *unamiable* and *baſe*.—Goodneſs, faithfulneſs, juſtice, and gratitude, on the one hand; and cruelty, treachery, injuſtice, and ingratitude on the other, cannot appear alike to any mind. On all who perceive and compare them, they muſt have oppoſite effects. The *firſt* muſt be liked, the *laſt* diſliked; the *firſt* muſt be loved, the *laſt* hated. Nor is it poſſible that theſe ſentiments ſhould be reverſed. To *behold* virtue, is to *admire* it. To behold it in its intrinſic and complete importance, dignity, and excellence, is to poſſeſs ſupreme affection

affection for it. On the contrary; to *perceive vice*, is the very ſame as to *blame and condemn*. To perceive it in its naked form and malignity, is to dread and deteſt it above all things.

Self-approbation and ſelf-reproach are the chief ſources of private happineſs and miſery. Theſe are connected with, and entirely dependent upon, our conſciouſneſs of practiſing or not practiſing virtue. Self-approbation cannot be ſeparated from the remembrance of having done *well*; nor ſelf-condemnation from the remembrance of having done *wrong*. Nothing can be of more conſequence to a being, who is obliged to be perpetually reflecting on himſelf, than to be at peace with himſelf, and able to bear the ſurvey of his actions. Virtue and vice, therefore, from the *natures of things*, are the immediate and principal, and the moſt conſtant and intimate cauſes of private happineſs and miſery.

It ſhould be remembered here, that the effects produced by the conſideration of virtue and vice, muſt be different in different beings, and in the ſame being in different circumſtances of his exiſtence. The pleaſure received from virtuous actions, (that is the

the ſenſe of *beauty* in them) muſt be varied by numberleſs cauſes, both in the circumſtances of the actions, and in the underſtandings and conditions of the percipient beings. Pain or ſickneſs; the influence of implanted byaſſes and propenſions; many different diſpoſitions of the temper, and aſſociated ideas, may leſſen or prevent the effects that would otherwiſe follow the perception of moral good and evil: But ſtill the eſſential tendencies continue the ſame; and to every rational mind properly diſpoſed, morally good actions muſt for ever be *acceptable*, and can never *of themſelves* offend; and morally evil actions muſt for ever be *diſagreeable*, and can never *of themſelves* pleaſe.—The effects produced by all cauſes depend on the particular circumſtances in which they operate, and muſt differ as theſe differ. And, agreeably to this general obſervation, the ſame objects of moral diſcernment, whatever may be their natural aptitude, muſt affect reaſonable beings differently, according to the different diſpoſitions they are in, and the different clearneſs of their perceptions.

Theſe

Theſe obſervations ſeem to lead to an idea of the happineſs of the Deity, that may deſerve to be juſt mentioned. Were the foundations of happineſs of a nature entirely factitious, it would be impoſſible to conceive, how that Being, who is himſelf the cauſe of all things, and can derive nothing from any foreign ſource, could be happy. But it has been ſhewn, that there are objects of contemplation naturally productive of delight; and perfections or qualities implying bleſſedneſs. A *reaſonable* being is capable of greater happineſs than a being merely *ſenſitive*. He has, *in himſelf*, the ſources of ſuperior enjoyment. And as much more wiſdom and reaſon as any being poſſeſſes; ſo much the higher bliſs he is capable of. There is, therefore, in the natures of things, a ſtable and permanent foundation of happineſs. And that of the Deity may reſult neceſſarily and wholly from what he *is* *; from his poſſeſſing in himſelf all truth, all good, all perfection, all that is *beatifying*.—But this is a ſubject much above us; and I

* Ος ευδαιμων μεν εστι και μακαριος, δι' ουδεν δε των εξωτερικων αγαθων, αλλα δι αυτον αυτος, και τω ποιος τις ειναι την φυσιν. *Ariſt. de Rep.* Lib. vii. cap. 1.

ſuſpect

ſuſpect, that in thinking of God as a happy being we fall into ſome groſs miſ-conceptions.

To return therefore from this digreſſion. The obſervations now made will not account for all our feelings and affections with reſpect to virtue and vice. Our intellectual faculties are in their infancy. The loweſt degrees of reaſon are ſufficient to diſcover *moral diſtinctions* in general; becauſe theſe are ſelf-evident, and included in the ideas of certain actions and characters. They muſt, therefore, appear to all who are capable of making actions the objects of their reflexion. But the extent to which they appear, and the accuracy and force with which they are diſcerned; and, conſequently, their influence, muſt, ſo far as they are the objects of pure intelligence, be in proportion to the ſtrength and improvement of the rational faculties of beings and their acquaintance with truth and the natures of things.

From hence, it muſt appear, that in men it is neceſſary that the *rational principle*, or the *intellectual diſcernment* of *right* and *wrong*, ſhould be aided by *inſtinctive determinations*.

—The

—The dictates of mere reaſon, being ſlow, and deliberate, would be otherwiſe much too weak. The condition in which we are placed, renders many urgent paſſions neceſſary for us; and theſe cannot but often interfere with our ſentiments of rectitude. Reaſon alone, (imperfect as it is in us) is by no means ſufficient to defend us againſt the danger to which, in ſuch circumſtances, we are expoſed. Our Maker has, therefore, wiſely provided remedies for its imperfections; and eſtabliſhed a due balance in our frame by annexing to our intellectual perceptions ſenſations and inſtincts, which give them greater weight and force.

In ſhort. The truth ſeems to be that, "in contemplating the actions of moral "agents, we have both a *perception of the* "*underſtanding*, and a *feeling of the heart*; "and that the latter, or the effects in us ac- "companying our moral perceptions, de- "pend on two cauſes. Partly, on the po- "ſitive conſtitution of our natures: But "principally on the eſſential congruity or "incongruity between moral ideas and our "intellectual faculties *."

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* *Placet ſuapte natura——virtus.* SEN.
Etiamſi a nullo laudetur, natura eſt laudabile. TULLY.

It may be difficult to determine the precise limits between these two sources of our mental feelings; and to say, how far the effects of the one are blended with those of the other. It is undoubted, that we should have felt and acted otherwise than we now do, if the decisions of reason had been left entirely without support; nor is it easy to imagine how pernicious to us this would have proved. On this account it cannot be doubted, but that both the causes I have mentioned unite their influence: And the great question in morality is, not whether we owe *much* to implanted senses and determinations; but whether we owe *all* to them.

It was, probably, in consequence of not duly considering the difference I have now insisted on between the *honestum* and *pulchrum* (the δικαιον and καλον;) or of not carefully distinguishing between the discernment of the mind, and the sensations attending it in our moral perceptions; that the Author of the *Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, was led to derive all our ideas of virtue from an implanted sense. Moral good and evil, he every where describes, by the effects accompanying the perception of them. The *rec-*

titude of an action is, with him, the ſame with its *gratefulneſs* to the obſerver; and wrong, the contrary. But what can be more evident, than that *right* and *pleaſure*, *wrong* and *pain*, are as different as a cauſe and its effect; what is *underſtood*, and what is *felt*; abſolute truth, and its *agreeableneſs* to the mind.—Let it be granted, as undoubtedly it muſt, that ſome degree of pleaſure is inſeparable from the obſervation of virtuous actions *: It is juſt as unreaſonable to infer from hence, that the diſcernment of virtue is nothing diſtinct from the reception of this pleaſure; as it would be to infer, as ſome have done, that ſolidity, extenſion, and figure are only *particular modes of ſenſation*; becauſe attended, whenever they are perceived, with ſome ſenſations of ſight or touch, and impoſſible to be conceived by the imagination without them.

An able writer on theſe ſubjects, tells us that, after ſome † doubts, he at laſt ſatisfied himſelf, that all beauty, whether natural

* The virtue of an action, Mr. *Hume* ſays, is its *pleaſing* us after *a particular manner*. *Treatiſe of Human Nature*, Vol. iii. page 103.

† See Mr. *Balguy's Tracts on the Foundation of Moral Goodneſs*, p. 61.

tural or moral, is a ſpecies of abſolute truth; as reſulting from, or conſiſting in, the neceſſary relations and congruities of ideas. It is not eaſy to ſay what this means. *Natural beauty* will be conſidered preſently. And as to *moral beauty*, one would think, that the meaning muſt be, that it denotes a real quality of certain actions. But the word *beauty* ſeems always to refer to the reception of pleaſure; and the *beauty*, therefore, of an action or character, muſt ſignify its being ſuch as *pleaſes us*, or has an aptneſs to *pleaſe* when perceived: Nor can it be juſt to conceive more in the action itſelf, or to affirm more of it, than *this aptneſs*, or that objective goodneſs or rectitude on which it depends. Beauty and lovelineſs are ſynonimous; but an object *ſelf-lovely* can only mean an object, by its nature, fitted to engage love.

But it may be farther worth obſerving, that the epithets *beautiful* and *amiable* are, in common language, confined to actions and characters that pleaſe us *highly*, from the peculiar degree of moral worth and virtue apprehended in them. All virtuous actions muſt be pleaſing to an intelligent obſerver; but they do not all pleaſe to the degree ne-

ceſſary to entitle them to theſe epithets, as we generally apply them.—The nature and origin of our ideas of the different degrees of virtue and vice in actions will be the ſubject of a particular enquiry hereafter.

Theſe obſervations are applicable with a little variation to *natural beauty*. The general ſource of it, as obſerved by Dr. *Hutcheſon*, is UNIFORMITY AMIDST VARIETY. If we aſk, why this *pleaſes?* The proper anſwer, I think, is, that by its nature it is adapted to pleaſe—There ſeems no more occaſion in this caſe to have recourſe to an *implanted ſenſe* than in the former.—Some objects, I have ſhewn, are neceſſarily ſatisfactory to our thoughts, and carry in themſelves a power to give pleaſure when ſurveyed. And though this pleaſure in many circumſtances is loſt; and regular and harmonious forms, through the influence of counter acting cauſes, may ſometimes even offend; yet they are incapable of offending *as ſuch*, or under the conception of regular and harmonious: That is, it is not in any inſtance *they* give pain, but ſome malady in the mind, or ſome diſagreeable idea aſſociated with them.

The

The following facts deserve notice, and may be considered as contributing greatly towards producing the complacency of our minds in regular objects, and the preference we give them.

First, They are more easily viewed and comprehended by our minds. Every one knows how much more difficult it is to retain in the memory, a multitude of things which are unconnected and lie in confusion, than of things disposed according to a rule and plan. It is order that unites the parts of a complicated object, so that we can survey it at once with distinctness and satisfaction; whereas, if it wanted order it would become not one, but a multiplicity of objects; our conceptions of it would be broken and embarrassed, between many different * parts, which had no correspondence to one another, and each of which would require a distinct idea of itself. By *regularity*, *variety* is measured and determined, and infinity itself, as it were, conquered by the mind, and subjected to its view. The justness of these observations will appear to any

* See *The Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty*, Sect. viii. 2.

one, by conſidering abſtract truths, and the general laws of nature; or by thinking of a thouſand equal lines, as ranged into the form of a regular Polygon, or, on the contrary, as joined to one another at adventures without any order.

Farther. Order and ſymmetry give objects their ſtability and ſtrength, and ſubſerviency to any valuable purpoſe. What ſtrength would an army have, without order? Upon what depends the health of animal bodies, but upon the due order and adjuſtments of their ſeveral parts? What happineſs could prevail in the world, if it was a *chaos?*

Thirdly. Regularity and order evidence art and deſign. The objects in which they appear bear the impreſſes of intelligence upon them; and this, perhaps, is one of the principal cauſes of their agreeableneſs.

Confuſion denotes only the negation of regularity and order, and it is not poſitively diſpleaſing except where we expected order; or where it appears to be owing to impotence and want of ſkill.

It is ſcarcely needful to obſerve, that brutes are incapable of the pleaſures of beauty, becauſe they proceed from a *compariſon* of

of objects, and a diſcernment of *analogy*, *deſign*, and *proportion*, to which their faculties do not reach.

It has been aſſerted that it is *variety* alone that pleaſes in beautiful objects; and the *uniformity* only as neceſſary to make it diſtinctly perceivable by the mind. It might, perhaps, with equal reaſon, be affirmed that it is *uniformity* alone that pleaſes, and *variety* only as requiſite to its being exhibited and diſplayed in a greater degree.

I have already noticed the opinion that *natural beauty* is a real quality of objects,—It ſeems impoſſible for any one to conceive the objects themſelves to be endowed with more than a particular order of parts, and with *powers*, or an *affinity* to our perceptive faculties, thence ariſing; and, if we call this *beauty*, then it is an abſolute, inherent quality of certain objects; and equally exiſtent whether any mind diſcerns it or not. But, ſurely, order and regularity are, more properly, the *cauſes* of beauty than *beauty itſelf*.

It may be farther worth the reader's conſideration, how far the account given of the pleaſures received from the contemplation of moral good and of natural beauty may be

applied to the pleaſures received from many other ſources; as the *approbation of our fellow-creatures*, *greatneſs of objects*, *diſcovery of truth* and *increaſe of knowledge*.

I will only add, that in ſuch enquiries as theſe, we are neceſſarily led to conſider the nature and origin of our notions of *perfection* and *excellency*.

Thoſe who think there is no diſtinction, in point of real *objective* excellence and worth, between *actions* and *characters*, may be expected to fly to a *ſenſe* to account for any *preference* we give in our ideas to any objects *. We have ideas of different degrees of perfection in different objects; but, upon this ſcheme, they are all an *illuſion*. The whole compaſs and poſſibility of being is, to

* We have the ideas of greater decency and dignity in ſome pleaſures than in others; as, in the pleaſures of the imagination or the underſtanding, when compared with thoſe of the bodily ſenſes. Dr. *Hutcheſon*, after obſerving this, ſeems uncertain whether it ought to be aſcribed to a conſtant opinion of innocence in the former pleaſures; which would reduce the preference we give them, as he ſays, to the *moral ſenſe*; or whether there be not in theſe caſes a different ſort of perceptions to be reckoned another claſs of ſenſations. See *Treatiſe of the Paſſions*, Sect. 1. Art. 1.

to the eye of right reaſon, in this reſpect entirely on a level. The very notion of *intrinſic* excellence, *ſelf*-worth and different degrees of *objective* perfection and imperfection, implies an impoſſibility and contradiction.—How can it be poſſible for any perſon to acquieſce in ſuch an opinion? When we conceive of an intelligent being as a more *noble and perfect* nature than a clod of earth; do we then err? Is it owing to an implanted power, that we make ſuch a diſtinction; or that, in particular, we give the preference in our eſteem to the divine nature, as ſurpaſſing infinitely in *excellence and dignity*, all other natures? The truth is; theſe, like the other ideas taken notice of in the preceding chapter, are ideas of the underſtanding. They are derived from the cognizance it takes of the comparative eſſences of things; and ariſe neceſſarily in our minds upon conſidering certain objects and qualities becauſe they denote *not* what we *feel*, but what ſuch objects and qualities *are*.

There is in nature an infinite variety of exiſtences and objects, which we as unavoidably conceive endowed with various degrees of *perfection*, as we conceive of them at all,

or

or conſider them as *different*. It is not poſſible to contemplate and compare dead matter and life; brutality and reaſon; miſery and happineſs; virtue and vice; ignorance and knowledge; impotence and power; the deity and inferior beings; without acquiring the ideas of *better* and *worſe*; *perfect* and *imperfect*; *noble* and *ignoble*; *excellent* and *baſe*.—The firſt remove from nothing is unwrought matter. Next above this is vegetative life; from whence we aſcend to ſenſitive and animal life, and from thence to happy and active intelligence; which admits of an infinite variety of degrees, and of different orders and claſſes of beings, riſing without end, above one another. Every ſucceſſive advance of our thoughts in this gradation, conveys the notion of higher and higher excellence and worth; till at laſt we arrive at uncreated and complete excellence. If this is not *intellectual* perception, but *ſenſation* merely; then may all nature as it now ſtands in our ideas be reverſed; and the duſt we tread be conceived to poſſeſs ſupreme excellence, as juſtly and truly as now the contrary is conceived.

I am pleaſed to find an excellent writer expreſſing fully my ſentiments on this ſub-

ſubject *. " We cannot (ſays he) avoid " obſerving, that of things which occur to " our thoughts, the idea of ſuperior excel- " lence accompanies ſome upon a compa- " riſon with others. As the external ſenſes " diſtinguiſh between pleaſant and painful " in their objects, and the internal ſenſe " perceives a difference between the beau- " tiful and the deformed; ſo the *underſtand-* " *ing* not only ſeparates truth from falſe- " hood, but diſcerns a dignity in ſome " beings and ſome qualities beyond others. " It is not poſſible for a man to conſider " inanimate nature and life, the brutal and " the rational powers, or virtue and vice, " with a perfect indifference, or without " preferring one before the other in his " eſteem. And the idea of a difference in " the degrees of their perfection, as neceſ- " ſarily ariſes in his mind, as that of a " difference in their being."

* See Mr. Abernethy's Sermons Vol. II. p. 219.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of the Origin of our Desires and Affections.

WHAT comes next to be enquired into, according to the order proposed in page 7. is our perception of GOOD and ILL-DESERT. But before I enter on this enquiry, I must turn the reader's attention to another subject closely connected with the subject already examined, and the consideration of which, my design in this work will not allow me to omit. I mean, the origin of our affections in general; and, particularly, of *self-love* and *benevolence*.

Each of our affections has its particular end. SELF-LOVE leads us to desire and pursue *private*, and BENEVOLENCE, *public* happiness. AMBITION is the love of fame, and distinction;

distinction; and CURIOSITY is the love of what is new and uncommon. The objects of these and all our other affections, are desired for their own sakes; and constitute so many distinct principles of action. What is not at all desired *for itself*, but only as a means of something else, cannot, with any propriety, be called the object of an affection. If, for example, according to the opinion of some, we desire every thing merely as the means of our own good, and with an ultimate view to it, then in reality we desire nothing but our own good, and have only the one single affection of self-love.

As all moral approbation and disapprobation, and our ideas of beauty and deformity, have been ascribed to an INTERNAL SENSE; meaning by this, not "*any inward* "power of perception," but "an *implanted* "*power*, different from *reason*;" so, all our desires and affections have, in like manner, been ascribed to INSTINCT, *meaning by instinct, not merely* "*the immediate desire of an* "*object*," but "the *reason* of this desire; "or an *implanted propension*."—The former opinion I have already at large examined. I am now to examine the latter.

"Is

" Is then all desire to be considered as " *wholly instinctive?* Is it, in particular, " owing to nothing but an original bias " given our natures, which they might " have either wanted or have received in " a contrary direction; that we are at " all concerned for our own good, or for " the good of others?"

As far as this enquiry relates to *private* good, we may without hesitation answer in the negative. The desire of happiness for *ourselves*, certainly arises not from INSTINCT. The full and adequate account of it, is, *the nature of happiness.* It is impossible, but that creatures capable of pleasant and painful sensations, should *love and chuse* the one, and *dislike and avoid* the other. No being, who knows what happiness and misery are, can be supposed indifferent to them, without a plain contradiction. Pain is not a *possible* object of *desire*; nor happiness, of *aversion.* No power whatsoever can cause a creature, in the agonies of torture and misery, to be pleased with his state, to like it for itself, or to wish to remain so. Nor can any power cause a creature rejoicing in bliss to *dislike* his state, or be *afraid* of its continuance. Then only can this happen, when

when pain can be *agreeable*, and pleasure *disagreeable*; that is, when pain can be pleasure; and pleasure, pain.

From hence I infer, that it is by no means, in general, an absurd method of explaining our affections, to derive them from the natures of things and of beings. For thus without doubt we are to account for one of the most important and active of all our affections. To the preference and desire of *private happiness* by all beings, nothing more is requisite than to *know* what it *is*.—"And "may not this be true, likewise, of *public* "happiness? May not benevolence be "*essential* to *intelligent* beings, as well as "self-love to *sensible beings?*"

But to enter a little more minutely into the discussion of this point. Let us, again, put the case of a being *purely* reasonable. It is evident, that (though by supposition void of *implanted* byasses) he would not want all principles of action, and all inclinations. It has been shewn he would perceive VIRTUE, and possess affection to it, in proportion to the degree of his knowledge. The nature of *happiness* also would engage him to chuse and desire it for *himself*. And is it credible that, at the same time, he would

would be neceſſarily indifferent about it for *others?* Can it be ſuppoſed to have that in it, which would determine him to ſeek it for *himſelf*; and yet to have nothing in it, which could engage him to approve of it for *others?* Would the nature of things, upon this ſuppoſition, be conſiſtent? Would he not be capable of ſeeing, that the happineſs of others is to them as important as his is to him; and that it is in itſelf equally valuable and deſirable, whoever poſſeſſes it?

Let us again enquire; would not this being aſſent to this propoſition; "happineſs is *better* than miſery?"—A definition has been aſked of the word *better* here. With equal reaſon might a definition be aſked of the word *greater*, when the whole is affirmed to be *greater* than a part. Both denote ſimple ideas, and both *truth*. The one, what happineſs is, compared with miſery; and the other, what the whole is, compared with a part. And a mind that ſhould think happineſs not to be better than miſery, would miſtake as groſsly, as a mind that ſhould believe the whole not to be *greater* than a part. It cannot therefore be reaſonably doubted, but that ſuch a being, upon a comparifon of happineſs and miſery, would

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as unavoidably as he perceives their difference, *prefer* the one to the other; and *chuse* the one rather than the other, for his fellow-beings.

If the idea the word *better* stands for, in the before-mentioned proposition, is indeed to be referred to a *sense*, and implies nothing *true*; if to the judgment of right reason, happiness and misery are objects in themselves indifferent, this must be perfectly understood by the Deity. There can, in him, therefore, be no preference of one to the other. There is nothing *in* happiness to engage or justify his choice of it. What account, then, is to be given of his *goodness?* —Some will say; the same account that is to be given of his *existence*; meaning no account at all. But there is an account to be given of his existence; even the same with that which is to be given of all necessary truth: And this account is fully applicable to his *benevolence*, as the origin of it has been now explained. But were this, universally, an implanted and factitious principle; it would be unavoidable to conclude, that it cannot exist in a nature from which must be excluded every thing implanted and factitious. How much, therefore, upon this suppos-

tion, will our evidences for this attribute be leſſened? Can we admit a ſuppoſition which obliges us to conceive God as good, *without* the approbation of his underſtanding?—This is a ſimilar argument to that uſed before in the firſt chapter; and it may be farther proper to hint, though it can ſcarce eſcape obſervation, that, what I have endeavoured to ſhew in that chapter, infers what I have ſaid on the preſent ſubject; and that if either be right, both muſt be ſo.

It is confeſſed, that, in our inward ſentiments, we are determined to make a diſtinction between publick happineſs and miſery; and to apprehend a preferableneſs of the one to the other. But it is aſſerted, that this is owing to our frame; that it ariſes from ſenſes and inſtincts *given* us, and not from the *nature* of happineſs and miſery.—But why is this aſſerted? It *may be* owing to the latter cauſe. The inſtance of ſelf-love *demonſtrates* this.—Let any thing equivalent be offered to prove the contrary.

In the ſame manner in which ſelf-love and benevolence have been explained, may we account for ſome of our other affections. But theſe being of leſs importance, and the conſideration of them not ſo much

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in my way, I shall only just touch upon the love of fame and of knowledge.

Approbation and disapprobation of ourselves and others, as our own actions and dispositions, or those of others, are observed to be right or wrong, are unavoidable. Intelligence therefore, alone, being sufficient for the perception of morality, lays the foundation of fame and honour. And it is not much less evident that it will, likewise, give rise to the desire and pursuit of them.

Can a reasonable being be indifferent about *his own* approbation? If not about *his own*; why should we think him necessarily so about that of others? Is there nothing in the *good opinion* and *esteem* of his fellow-beings which can incline him to chuse them, rather than their *contempt* and *aversion?*

The desire of *knowledge* also, and the preference of TRUTH, must arise in every intelligent mind. TRUTH is the proper object of mind, as light is of the eye, or harmony of the ear. To this it is, by its nature, fitted, and upon this depends its existence; there being no idea possible of *mind*, or *understanding*, without something to be *understood*. Truth and Science are of

infinite extent; and it is not conceivable, that the underſtanding can be indifferent to them; that it ſhould want inclination to ſearch into them; that its progreſs, in the diſcovery of them, ſhould be attended with no ſatisfaction; or that, with the proſpect before it of unbounded ſcope for improvement and endleſs acquiſitions, it ſhould be capable of being equally contented with error, darkneſs, and ignorance.

Why, therefore, reaſonable beings love *truth*, *knowledge*, *and honour*, is to be anſwered in the ſame manner with the enquiry; why they love and deſire *happineſs?*

In the method now purſued, we might go on to give a particular explication of the cauſes and grounds of the various ſentiments of veneration, awe, love, wonder, eſteem, &c. produced within us by the contemplation of certain objects. As ſome objects are adapted to *pleaſe*, and as others neceſſarily excite *deſire*; ſo almoſt every different object has a different effect on our minds, according to its different nature and qualities. And theſe emotions, or impreſſions, are almoſt as different and various, as the objects themſelves of our conſideration. Why ſhould we ſcruple aſcribing them

them to a necessary correspondence between them and their respective objects?—It cannot be true, that, antecedently to arbitrary constitution, *any* affections of our minds are equally and indifferently applicable to *any* objects and qualities: Nor can any one assert this, without going so far as to deny all *real* connexion between causes and effects.

But it must not be forgotten, that, in men, the sentiments and tendencies of our intelligent nature are, in a great degree, mingled with the effects of arbitrary constitution. It is necessary this observation, before insisted on, should be here called to mind. Rational and dispassionate benevolence would, in us, be a principle much too weak, and utterly insufficient for the purposes of our present state. And the same is true of our other rational principles and desires.

And this, perhaps, will afford us a good reason for distinguishing between *affections* and *passions* The former, which we apply indiscriminately to all reasonable beings, may most properly signify the desires founded in the reasonable nature itself, and essential to it; such as self-love, benevolence, and the love of truth.—These, when strengthened by

inſtinctive determinations, take the latter denomination; or are, properly, *paſſions*.—Thoſe tendencies within us that are merely inſtinctive, ſuch as hunger, thirſt, &c, we commonly call *appetites* or *paſſions* indifferently, but ſeldom or never *affections*.

I cannot help, in this place, ſtepping aſide a little to take notice of an opinion already referred to; I mean, the opinion of thoſe who will allow of no *ultimate* object of deſire beſides *private* good. What has led to this opinion has been inattention to the difference between *deſire*, and the *pleaſure* implied in the gratification of it. The latter is ſubſequent to the former, and founded in it: That is, an object, ſuch as *fame*, *knowledge*, or the *welfare of a friend*, is deſired, not becauſe we foreſee that when obtained, it will give us pleaſure; but, *vice verſa*; obtaining it gives us pleaſure, becauſe we previouſly deſired it or had an *affection* carrying us to it and reſting in it. And, were there no ſuch affections, the very foundations of happineſs would be deſtroyed. It cannot be conceived, that obtaining what we do not deſire, ſhould be the cauſe of pleaſure to us; or that what we are perfectly

perfectly indifferent to, and is not the end of any affection, should, upon being possessed, be the means of any kind of gratification *.

Besides; if every object of desire is considered—merely as the cause of pleasure; one would think, that, antecedently to experience, no one object could be desired more than another; and that the first time we contemplated fame, knowledge, or the happiness of others; or had any of the objects of our natural passions and desires proposed to us, we must have been absolutely indifferent to them, and remained so, till, by some means, we were convinced of the connexion between them and pleasure.

For farther satisfaction on this point, nothing can be more proper than to consider; whether, supposing we could enjoy the same pleasure *without* the object of our desire, we should be indifferent to it. Could we enjoy pleasures equivalent to those attending knowledge, or the approbation of others, without them, or

* "The very idea of happiness or enjoyment, (as "Dr. *Butler* says) is this, an appetite or affection hav-"ing its object." See Sermons preached at the *Roll*'s chapel.

with infamy and ignorance, would we no longer wiſh for the one or be averſe to the other? Would a perſon loſe all curioſity, and be indifferent whether he ſtirred a ſtep to gratify it, were he aſſured he ſhould receive equal ſenſations of pleaſure by ſtaying where he is? Did you believe, that the proſperity of your neareſt kindred, your friends or your country, would be the means of no greater happineſs to you, than their miſery; would you loſe all love to them, and all deſires of their good?—Would you not chuſe to enjoy the ſame quantity of pleaſure *with* virtue, rather than *without* it?—An unbiaſſed mind muſt ſpurn at ſuch enquiries; and any one who would, in this manner, examine himſelf, might eaſily find, that all his affections and appetites (ſelf-love itſelf excepted) are, in their nature, *diſintereſted*; and that, though the ſeat of them be *ſelf*, and the effect of them the gratification of *ſelf*, their direct tendency is always to ſome particular object different from private pleaſure, beyond which they carry not our view. So far is it from being true, that, in following their impulſes, we aim at nothing but our own intereſt; that we continually feel them drawing us aſtray

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from what we *know* to be our interest; and may observe men every day carried by them to actions and pursuits, which they acknowledge to be ruinous to them.

But to return from this digression.—Of our several passions and appetites, some are subordinate to self-love, and given with a view to the preservation and welfare of *individuals*. Others are subordinate to benevolence, and given in order to secure and promote the happiness of the *species*. The occasion for them arises entirely from our deficiencies and weaknesses. Reason alone, did we possess it in a higher degree, would answer all the ends of them.—Thus; there would be no need of the *parental affection*, were all parents sufficiently acquainted with the reasons for taking upon them the guidance and support of those whom nature has placed under their care, and were they virtuous enough to be always determined by those reasons. And, in all other instances of implanted principles, it is plain, that there is a certain degree of knowledge and goodness, by which they would be rendered superfluous.

It

It is incumbent on thoſe who ſee this, and can regard *appetite*, as, in the deſign of nature, merely miniſterial and ſupplemental to *reaſon*, and neceſſary only on the account of its imperfections, to labour to improve it, and to extend its influence as much as poſſible; to learn more and more, in all inſtances, to ſubſtitute it in the room of *appetite*, and to diminiſh continually the occaſion for inſtinctive principles in themſelves.—All the inferior orders of creatures, and men themſelves during their firſt years, have no other guide than *inſtinct*. The farther men advance in exiſtence, and the wiſer and better they grow, the more they are diſengaged from it. And there may be numberleſs orders of ſuperior beings, who are abſolutely above it, and under the ſole influence and guidance of reaſon.

We cannot, indeed, conſidering the preſent weak and imperfect ſtate of human reaſon, ſufficiently admire the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, in the proviſion he has made againſt the evils which would ariſe from hence, by particular, inſtinctive determinations. As long as men have not that wiſdom which would ſecure their taking regularly the ſuſtenance neceſſary for their

their support, upon barely knowing it to be proper at certain intervals; how kind is it to remind them of it, and urge them to it, by the solicitations of *hunger?* As it is probable, they would not be sufficiently engaged to the relief of the miserable, without the sympathies and impulses of *compassion*; how properly are *these* given them? And as, in like manner, if left to mere reason, the care of their offspring would be little attended to; how wisely are they bound to them by the *parental fondness*, and not suffered to neglect them without doing violence to themselves?

In general; were we trusted wholly with the care of ourselves, and was our benevolence determined alike to all mankind, or no farther to particular persons according to our different relations to them, than unassisted reason would determine it; what confusion would ensue? What misery would be soon introduced into human affairs?

How evidently, therefore, do the wisdom and benevolence of our Maker appear in the frame of our natures?—It is true, that these very principles, the necessity of which to the preservation and happiness of the species, we so evidently see, often prove, in event,

event, the causes of many grievous evils. But they are plainly *intended* for *good*. These evils are the *accidental*, not the *proper* consequences of them. They proceed from the unnatural abuse and corruption of them, and happen entirely through our own fault, contrary to what appears to be the constitution of our nature and the will of our Maker. It is impossible to produce one instance in which the *original* direction of nature is to evil, or to any thing not, upon the whole, best.

I am not at all solicitous about determining nicely, in all cases, what in our natures is to be resolved into *instinct*, and what not. It is sufficient, if it appears, that the most important of our desires and affections have a higher and less precarious original.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Of our Ideas of good and ill Desert.

IT is needleſs to ſay any thing to ſhew that the ideas of good and ill deſert neceſſarily ariſe in us upon conſidering certain actions and characters; or, that we conceive virtue as always *worthy*, and vice as the contrary. Theſe ideas are plainly a ſpecies of the ideas of right and wrong. There is, however, the following difference between them, which may be worth mentioning. The epithets, *right* and *wrong*, are, with ſtrict propriety, applied only to *actions*; but *good* and *ill deſert* belong rather to the *agent*. It is the *agent* alone, that is capable of happineſs or miſery; and, therefore, it is he alone that properly can be ſaid to *deſerve* theſe.

I apprehend no great difficulty in explaining theſe ideas. They ſuppoſe virtue practiſed, or neglected; and regard the treatment

ment due to beings in conſequence of this. They ſignify the propriety which there is in making virtuous agents happy, and in diſcountenancing the vicious. When we ſay, a man *deſerves* well, we mean, that his character is ſuch, that we *approve* of ſhewing him *favour*; or that it is *right* he ſhould be happier than if he had been of a contrary character. We cannot but love a virtuous agent, and deſire his happineſs above that of others. Reaſon determines at once, that he *ought* to be the better for his virtue.—A vicious being, on the contrary, as ſuch, we cannot but hate and condemn. Our concern for his happineſs is neceſſarily diminiſhed; nor can any truth appear more ſelf-evidently to our minds, than that it is improper he ſhould proſper in his wickedneſs, or that happineſs ſhould be conferred on him to the ſame degree that it is on others of worthy characters; or that it would have been conferred on himſelf, had he been virtuous.

Different characters require different treatment. Virtue affords a *reaſon* for communicating happineſs to the agent. Vice is a *reaſon* for withdrawing favour, and for puniſhing.—This ſeems to be very intelligible.

gible. But in order farther to explain this point, it is neceſſary to obſerve particularly, that the *whole* foundation of the ſentiments now mentioned is by no means this; "the "tendency of virtue to the happineſs of the "world, and of vice to its miſery; or the "publick utility of the one, and pernici-"ouſneſs of the other."—We have an *immediate* approbation of making the virtuous happy, and diſcouraging the vicious, abſtracted from all conſequences. Were there but two beings in the univerſe, one of whom was virtuous, the other vicious; or, were we to conceive two ſuch beings, in other reſpects alike, governed apart from the reſt of the world, and removed for ever from the notice of all other creatures; we ſhould ſtill approve of a different treatment of them. That the good being ſhould be leſs happy, or a greater ſufferer, than his evil fellow being, would appear to us wrong.

Suppoſe a perſon had any particular benefit to communicate, and that the only conſideration to determine which of two competitors ſhall have it, is their contrary moral characters; what room would there be for heſitation? Who would not immediately determine in favour of the virtuous character?

character? Can it be ſaid it would be indifferent which of the competitors was preferred, if there were no other beings in the world; or if all memory of the fact was to be immediately obliterated? The virtuous perſon, every one would think, is *worthy* of the benefit; the other *unworthy*: That is, their reſpective characters are ſuch, that it is right it ſhould be conferred on the one *rather* than the other. But, why *right*? Not merely on account of the effects; (which, in theſe inſtances, we are far from taking time always to conſider) but *immediately and ultimately right*; and, for the ſame reaſon that beneficence is right, and that objects and relations, in general, are what they are.

The moral worth or MERIT of an agent, then, is, "his virtue conſidered as imply-"ing the fitneſs, that good ſhould be com-"municated to him preferably to others; "and as diſpoſing all obſervers to eſteem, "and love him, and ſtudy his happineſs."—Virtue naturally, and of itſelf, recommends to favour and happineſs, qualifies for them, and renders the being poſſeſſed of it the proper object of encouragement and reward. It is, in a like ſenſe, we ſay that a perſon, who

who has been a benefactor to another, *deſerves* well of him; that benefits received ought to be acknowledged and recompenſed; and, that the perſon who beſtows them is, preferably to others, the proper object of our regard and benevolence.

I deny not, but that one circumſtance of great importance, upon which is grounded the fitneſs of countenancing virtue and diſcountenancing vice among reaſonable beings, is, the manifeſt tendency of this to prevent miſery, and to preſerve order and happineſs in the world. What I aſſert is, that it is not *all* that renders ſuch a procedure right; but that, ſetting aſide the conſideration of publick intereſt, it would ſtill remain right to make a diſtinction between the lots of the virtuous and vicious. Vice is of ESSENTIAL DEMERIT; and virtue is *in itſelf rewardable.* For, once more, let us imagine an order of reaſonable beings made to paſs through a particular ſtage of exiſtence, at the end of which they are annihilated: Among whom, during the period they exiſted, no diſtinction was made on account of their different characters: Virtue was not favoured, nor vice puniſhed: Happineſs and miſery were diſtributed promiſcuouſly;

miſcuouſly; the guilty often proſperous, and flouriſhing; the good, as often afflicted and diſtreſſed, and ſometimes brought to untimely ends by the oppreſſion of their more happy, though wicked fellow-beings: The *moſt* wicked, generally, the *leaſt* ſufferers; and the *moſt* upright, the *leaſt* happy. Notwithſtanding all this, the quantity of happineſs enjoyed may be conceived to exceed the ill. But will any one ſay, that, were there no connexion between ſuch beings and the reſt of the univerſe, there would be nothing in the diſpoſition of its affairs that would be wrong?—It will be ſaid, for nothing elſe can be ſaid, "that ſuch a ſtate of "reaſonable beings cannot be approved be-"cauſe there would have been *more* happi-"neſs among them, had their different lots "been ordered agreeably to the rules of "diſtributive juſtice." But is it ſo unavoidable to ſee this, that every one's diſapprobation muſt be always immediately determined by it? Is there no other kind of wrong in ſo governing a ſyſtem of beings, than in producing a *ſmaller* quantity of happineſs rather than a *greater*? Or can the view of ſuch beings give as much ſatisfaction to an unbiaſſed mind, as if there had been

been among them, upon the whole, the ſame quantity of happineſs, but diſtributed with a regard to their moral characters?

In the caſe of a ſingle, ſolitary evil being, it may perhaps be very true, that the only thing that could juſtify putting him into a ſtate of abſolute miſery, would be its conduciveneſs to his reformation. But the reaſon why we approve of uſing methods to accompliſh his reformation, is not merely this; "that it is expedient to his happi-"neſs." For were this true, it would, in a moral view, be indifferent whether he was made happy in conſequence of being *puniſhed* and thus reformed, or in conſequence of ſuch an extraordinary communication of advantages as ſhould counter-act and overbalance any ſufferings neceſſarily occaſioned by his vices. Can we equally approve theſe oppoſite methods of treating ſuch a being? Suppoſing the ſame quantity of happineſs enjoyed, is it indifferent whether a being enjoys it in a courſe of wickedneſs, or of virtue?—It would be extravagant to aſſert, that there is no *poſſible* method whereby a being can, in any degree, eſcape the hurtful effects of his vices, or loſe the beneficial ef-

fects of his virtue. We fee enough in the preſent world to convince us of the contrary.

Several queſtions which I cannot anſwer may be aſked on this ſubject. There are many particular caſes and different circumſtances of agents and of guilt, in which it may be difficult to determine what is right to be done; nor is it at all neceſſary to my preſent purpoſe that I ſhould take notice of ſuch caſes. It is ſufficient, if I have given a juſt account of good and ill deſert in general; and ſhewn, that virtue is eſſentially a *proper* object of *favour*, vice of *diſcouragement*; and that the *rewardableneſs* of the one, and the *demerit* of the other, are inſtances of abſolute and eternal rectitude, the ideas of which ariſe in us *immediately* upon the conſideration of virtuous and vicious characters, appear always along with them, and are, by no means, wholly coincident with or reſolvable into views of publick *utility* and *inutility*.

Upon this perception of good and ill deſert is founded the paſſion of reſentment; the hopes unavoidably ſpringing up in every virtuous mind; and the preſaging terrors

and

and anticipations of punishment accompanying a consciousness of guilt.

Let me add; that there is no perception of our minds which it becomes us more to attend to. It points out to us clearly, the *way* to happiness and the *conditions* of it. It is seeing, that according to just order and equity, sin is the forfeiture of our expectations of good; and virtue, the ground of the highest hope.—Considered merely, as a principle of the natures which God has given us, or a determination interwoven with our frame, it implies a declaration from the author of our minds, informing us how he will deal with us, and upon what the exercise of his goodness to us is suspended.—But, considered as a necessary perception of reason, it proves with the evidence of demonstration what the *supreme reason* will do; what laws and rules it observes in carrying on the happiness of the universe; and that its end is, not simply happiness, but "happiness enjoyed with virtue *."

* "Perhaps divine goodness, with which, if I mis-
"take not, we make very free in our speculations,
"may not be a bare single disposition to produce hap-
"piness; but a disposition to make the good, the faith-
"ful,

Before I proceed to the next chapter, I cannot help desiring the reader, once more, to reflect on that reverse of nature, which is possible, and which might have obtained, if the opinion concerning the foundation of morals which I have opposed be true. Let him try to conceive of the world, and of all our ideas of good, of morality, of perfection, and of the Deity as inverted; the principal objects of the consideration of our minds as not *being* what they now *seem* to be, but as perceived by all intelligent beings *under notions* entirely contrary: what is now approved and esteemed, as disapproved and hated: all that is now contemplated as *fit*, as *worthy*, as *amiable and excellent*,

" ful, the honest man happy. Perhaps an infinitely " perfect mind may be pleased, with seeing his crea- " tures behave suitably to the nature he has given " them; to the relations in which he has placed them " to each other; and to that which they stand in to " himself: that relation to himself, which, during " their existence, is even necessary, and which is the " most important one of all: perhaps, I say, an infi- " nitely perfect mind may be pleased with this moral " piety of moral agents, in and for itself; as well as " upon account of its being essentially conducive to the " happiness of his creation."

See *Butler's Analogy*, Part I. Chap. 2.

lent, appearing *evil and base:* cruelty, impiety, ingratitude and treachery apprehended to be *virtue*; and beneficence, piety, gratitude and faithfulness, to be *wickedness:* The very aversion arising in us in considering the former, produced by the latter: respect and love excited by ill offices; contempt and resentment by acts of kindness: misery prevailing throughout the world, as happiness now does, and chosen and pursued with the same universal approbation and ardour: *virtue*, conceived as having *demerit*; and *vice*, as well-deserving and rewardable.—Can these things be? Is there nothing in any of them repugnant to the natures of things?

CHAP. V.

Of the relation of Morality to the Divine Nature; the Rectitude of our Faculties; and the Grounds of Belief.

MORALITY has been repreſented as neceſſary and immutable. There is an objection to this, which to ſome has appeared of conſiderable weight, and which it will be proper to examine.

It may ſeem "that this is ſetting up "ſomething diſtinct from God, which is "independent of him, and equally eternal "and neceſſary."

It is eaſy to ſee that this difficulty affects morality, no more than it does all truth. If for this reaſon, we muſt give up the unalterable natures of right and wrong, and make them dependent on the Divine will;

we

we muſt, for the ſame reaſon, give up all neceſſary truth, and aſſert the poſſibility of contradictions.

What I have hitherto aimed at has been, to prove that morality is a branch of *neceſſary truth*, and that it has the ſame foundation with it. If this is acknowledged, the main point I contend for is granted, and I ſhall be very willing that truth and morality ſhould ſtand and fall together. This ſubject however cannot be purſued far enough, and morality traced to its ſource, without entering into the conſideration of the difficulty now propoſed; which naturally occurs in all enquiries of this ſort.

In the firſt place, therefore, let it be obſerved, that ſomething there certainly is which we muſt allow not to be dependent on the will of God. For inſtance; this will itſelf; his own exiſtence; his eternity and immenſity; the difference between power and impotence, wiſdom and folly, truth and falſehood, exiſtence and non-exiſtence.

To ſuppoſe theſe dependent on his will, is ſo extravagant, that no one can aſſert it. It would imply, that he is a changeable and precarious being, and render it impoſſible for us to

to form any consistent ideas of his existence and attributes. But these must be the creatures of will, if all truth be so.—There is another view of this notion, which shews that it overthrows the Divine attributes and existence. For,

Secondly, Mind supposes truth; and intelligence, something intelligible. Wisdom supposes certain *objects* about which it is conversant; and knowledge, *knowables*.—An eternal, necessary *mind* supposes eternal, necessary *truth*; and infinite knowledge, infinite knowables. If then there were no infinity of knowables; no eternal, necessary, independent * truths; there could be no infinite, independent necessary *mind* or *intelligence*; because there would be nothing to be certainly and eternally known. Just as, if there were nothing *possible*, there could be no *power*; or, if there were no necessary *infinity* of possibles, there could be no necessary, *infinite* power; because power supposes objects, and eternal, necessary, infinite power, an infinity of eternal and necessary *possibles*.

In like manner it may be said, that if there were no *moral distinctions*, there could be

* Ἀιδια ὀντα, in *Plato*'s language.

be no *moral attributes in the Deity.* If there were nothing eternally and unalterably right and wrong, there could be nothing meant by his eternal, unalterable rectitude or holineſs.—It is evident, therefore, that annihilating truth, poſſibility, or moral differences, is indeed annihilating all mind, all power, all goodneſs; and that ſo far as we make the former precarious, dependent, or limited; ſo far we make the latter ſo too.

Hence we ſee clearly, that to conceive of truth as depending on God's will, is to conceive of his intelligence and knowledge as depending on his will. And is it poſſible, that any one can think this as reaſonable, as, on the contrary, to conceive of his *will* (which, from the nature of it, *requires ſomething* to guide and determine it) as dependent on and regulated by his *underſtanding*?—What can be more prepoſterous, than to make the Deity nothing but will; and to exalt this on the ruins of all his attributes?

But it may ſtill be urged, that theſe obſervations remove not the difficulty; but rather ſtrengthen it. We are ſtill left to conceive of "certain objects, diſtinct from "Deity, which are neceſſary and independent;

" dent; and on which too his exiſtence " and attributes are founded; and without " which, we cannot ſo much as form any " idea of them." I anſwer; we ought to diſtinguiſh between the *will* of God and his *nature*. It by no means follows, becauſe they are independent of his *will*, that they are alſo independent of his *nature*. To conceive thus of them would indeed involve us in the greateſt inconſiſtencies. Wherever, or in whatever objects, *neceſſity* and *infinity* occur to our thoughts, the divine, eternal nature is to be acknowledged.

We ſhall, I believe, be more willing to own this, when we have attentively conſidered what abſtract truth and poſſibility are. Our thoughts are here loſt in an unfathomable abyſs where we find room for an everlaſting progreſs, and where the very notion of arriving at a point, beyond which there is nothing farther, implies a contradiction. There is a proper infinity of ideal objects and verities *poſſible* to be known; and of ſyſtems, worlds, and ſcenes of being, perception, order, and art, wholly inconceivable to finite minds, *poſſible* to exiſt. This infinity of truth and poſſibility we cannot in thought deſtroy. Do what we will,

will, it always returns upon us. Every thought and every idea of every mind; every kind of agency and power, and every degree of intellectual improvement and pre-eminence amongſt all reaſonable beings, imply its neceſſary and unchangeable exiſtence.—Can this be any thing beſides the divine, uncreated, infinite *reaſon and power*, from whence all other reaſon and power are derived, offering themſelves to our minds, and forcing us to ſee and acknowledge them?—What is the true concluſion from ſuch conſiderations, but that there is an incomprehenſible *firſt* wiſdom, knowledge, and power *neceſſarily exiſting*, which contain in themſelves all things, from which all things ſprung *, and upon which all things depend?—There is nothing ſo intimate with us, and one with our natures, as *God*. He is included, as appears, in all our conceptions, and neceſſary to all the operations of our minds: Nor could he be *neceſſarily exiſtent*,

* It was, in all probability, ſomething of this kind, and not modern *Pantheiſm*, or *Spinoziſm*, that ſome of the ancients meant, when they repreſented God as being all things; as the unchangeable and infinite πὰ ὄντα and ἓν ὄν.

See Dr. *Cudworth*'s *Intellectual Syſtem*, Vol. I.

exiſtent, were not this true of him. For it is implied in the idea of *neceſſary exiſtence*, that it is *fundamental* to all other exiſtence, and pre-ſuppoſed in every *notion* we can frame of every thing.—In ſhort, it ſeems very plain, that truth having always a reference to MIND; infinite, eternal truth implies an infinite, eternal MIND: And that, not being itſelf a *ſubſtance*, nor yet *nothing*, it muſt be a *mode of a ſubſtance*; or the *eſſential wiſdom and intelligence of the one, neceſſary Being*.

It is worth obſerving that this gives us a kind of intuition of the *unity* of God. Infinite, abſtract truth is eſſentially *one*. This is no leſs clear of truth, than it is of ſpace or duration. When we have fixed our thoughts on infinite truth, and try to imagine a *ſecond* or *another* infinity of it; we find ourſelves endeavouring abſurdly to imagine *another* infinity of the *ſame* truth. It is ſelf-evident, then, that there can be but one infinite mind. Infinite truth ſuppoſes and infers the exiſtence of one infinite eſſence, as its *ſubſtratum*, and but one. Were there more, they would not be *neceſſary*.—Particular truths, contemplated at the ſame time by many different minds, are on this account, no more different, than the preſent

ſent moment of duration is different in one place from what it is in another; or, than the ſun is different, becauſe viewed at the ſame time by myriads of eyes.

Let it be remembered here, that in neceſſary truth, is included the comparative natures of happineſs and miſery; the *right* in producing the one, and the *wrong* in producing the other; and, in general, *moral* truth, moral fitneſs and excellence, and all that is *beſt* to be done in all caſes, and with reſpect to all the variety of actual or poſſible beings and worlds.—This is the neceſſary GOODNESS of the divine nature.—It demonſtrates, that, in the divine intelligience, abſolute rectitude is included; and that eternal, infinite power and reaſon are in eſſential conjunction with, and imply complete, moral excellence, and particularly perfect and boundleſs *Benevolence* *. It ſhews us, that whenever we trangreſs truth and right, we immediately affront

* *Ratio profecta à rerum natura, & ad recte faciendum impellens, à delicto avocans: quæ non tum denique incipit lex eſſe, cum ſcripta eſt, ſed tum cum orta eſt: orta autem ſimul eſt cum mente divina.* Cic. de Leg. Lib ii.—*Ita principem legem illam & ultimam, mentem eſſe omnia ratione aut cogentis aut vetantis Dei.* Ibid.—λογῳ ορθῳ πειθεσθαι και θεω παντων πρωτ. Hier. Carm Pythag.

affront that God who *is* truth and right; and that, on the contrary, whenever we determine ourſelves agreeably to them, we pay immediate homage to him.

From the whole it is plain, that none have reaſon to be offended, when *morality* is repreſented as eternal and immutable; for it appears that it is only ſaying that God himſelf is eternal and immutable, and making his nature the high and ſacred original of virtue, and the ſole fountain of all that is true and good and perfect.

The ſame kind of reaſoning with ſome that I have here uſed has been, by Dr. *Clark*, applied, (and I think juſtly) to *ſpace and duration*: But theſe ſentiments are more particularly countenanced by Dr. *Cudworth*, who, at the end of his Treatiſe on *Eternal and immutable Morality*, has conſidered the ſame difficulty, and given a like anſwer to it *.

There

* The authority of the admirable *Plato* might alſo have been here mentioned. Thoſe who are acquainted with his writings, know that he repreſents IDEAS, or the intelligible eſſences of things, as the only ſeat of truth and the only objects of knowledge and *mind*. Here only, according to him, can we find *unity*; it being

There is, perhaps, no ſubject where more muſt be truſted to every perſon's own re-

 flexion;

being plainly impoſſible to conceive of more than *one ſpecies* or abſtract eſſence of a triangle, or of any other object of the underſtanding. Theſe likewiſe he repreſents as the originals and examplars of all created exiſtences; as eternal and incorruptible; above all motion and mutation, and making up together the *one infinite, firſt intelligence*, or TO ON. Particular ſenſible exiſtences, on the contrary, he repreſents as being nothing fixed, or permanent in themſelves; but the ſeats of multiplicity, generation, and motion; the objects not of *knowledge*, but of *opinion and imagination*; and to be looked upon as rather *ſhadows*, than *realities*.—He ridicules thoſe *earth-born men*, (γηγενεις, *in Sophiſta*) as he ſtyles them, who rejecting all inviſible, incorporeal eſſences, and abſtract ideas, (νοητα, αμεταϰινητα, ασωματα, ϰαι αοϱατα ειδη. *Ibid.*) allow nothing to have exiſtence beſides the objects of ſenſe and fancy, or what they can ſee and handle: and ſays, that thoſe who have not learnt to look above all ſenſibles and individuals to abſtract truth and the natures of things, to beauty or good itſelf, are not to be ranked amongſt true philoſophers, but among the ignorant, the vulgar, and blind.—What he has delivered to this purpoſe has been carried into myſticiſm and jargon, by the *latter Platoniſts*; but this is no reaſon for rejecting it.—See the note at the end of the firſt chapter.

I cannot help particularly recommending to the reader's peruſal here, the two laſt chapters of Mr. *Harris*'s HERMES.

This

flexion; where the deficiencies of language are more ſenſible; or on which it is more difficult to write, ſo as to be entirely underſtood.

A great deal might have been added to what has been ſaid; and the whole argument, now very imperfectly touched, explained at large and purſued throughout, would, I think, contain one of the higheſt of

This writer has entered far into this part of *Plato*'s philoſophy; and I am glad to find that I can mention him as one of its patrons and friends.

"Theſe etymologies (ſays he, page 371, 2d edition) "prove their authors to have conſidered SCIENCE and "UNDERSTANDING, not as fleeting powers of perception, like *ſenſe*; but rather as ſteady, permanent, and "durable COMPREHENSIONS. But if ſo, we muſt, "ſomewhere or other, find for them *ſteady*, *permanent*, "and *durable* OBJECTS, &c.——The following, then, "are queſtions worth conſidering. *What* theſe objects "are? *Where* they reſide? And *how* they are to be "diſcovered?—Not by *experimental philoſophy* it is "plain, for that meddles with nothing but what is "tangible, corporeal, and mutable, &c."—"May we "be allowed (page 389) to credit thoſe ſpeculative "men, who tell us, *it is in theſe permanent and comprehenſive* FORMS, that the DEITY views at once, "without looking abroad, all poſſible productions, "both preſent, paſt, and future.—That this great and "ſtupendous view is but the view of himſelf, &c."

of all ſpeculations.—Some farther account of it may be found in the Diſſertation on the Being and attributes of God, at the end of this Treatiſe.

There has been another difficulty ſtarted †, in which morality is concerned, which will be proper for our preſent examination. It has been aſked, "whether the truth of "all our knowledge does not ſuppoſe the "right make of our faculties? whether it "is not poſſible, that theſe might have "been ſo conſtituted, as unavoidably to de-"ceive us in all our apprehenſions? and "how we can know that this is not actu-"ally the caſe?"

Some may imagine that theſe enquiries propoſe difficulties which are impoſſible to be ſurmounted, and that they bind us down to univerſal and invincible ſcepticiſm. For, "how are we to make out the truth of our "faculties, but by theſe very ſuſpected fa-"culties themſelves? and how vain would

† It is probable I ſhould not have taken notice of this objection, had I not found it conſidered by Dr. *Cudworth* at the end of his treatiſe of *eternal and immutable morality*; and anſwered in a manner, I judged not quite clear and ſatisfactory.

" be ſuch an attempt? where could it leave " us but where it found us?"—It may be obſerved, that it is not only us, but all reaſonable creatures, who are thus reduced to a ſtate of everlaſting ſcepticiſm: Nay, that it muſt be impoſſible, God ſhould make any creature, who ſhall be able to ſatisfy himſelf on any point, or believe even his own exiſtence. For what ſatisfaction can he obtain, in any caſe, but by the intervention of his faculties? and how ſhall he know that they are not deluſive?—Theſe are very ſtrange conſequences; but let us conſider,

Firſt, That we are informed of this difficulty *by* our faculties, and that, conſequently, if we do not know that any regard is due to their information, we likewiſe do not know that there is any regard due to *this* difficulty.—It will appear preſently to be a contradiction, to ſuppoſe that our faculties can teach us univerſally to ſuſpect themſelves.

Secondly, Our natures are ſuch, that whatever we ſee, or *think* we ſee evidence againſt, we *cannot* believe. If then there ſhould appear to us, on the whole, any evidence againſt the ſuppoſition, that our faculties

are

are ſo contrived as always to deceive us, we are obliged to reject it. Evidence muſt produce conviction proportioned to the imagined degree of it; and conviction is inconſiſtent with ſuſpicion. It will ſignify nothing to urge that no evidence in this caſe can be regarded, becauſe diſcovered by our ſuſpected faculties; for, we cannot ſuſpect, we cannot in any caſe doubt *without* reaſon, or *againſt* reaſon. Doubting ſuppoſes evidence; and there cannot, therefore, be any ſuch thing as doubting, whether evidence itſelf is to be regarded. A man who doubts of the veracity of his faculties, muſt do it on their own authority; that is, *at the very time, and in the very act of ſuſpecting them*, he muſt *truſt* them. As nothing is more plainly ſelf-deſtructive, than to attempt to *prove* by reaſon, that reaſon deſerves no credit, or to aſſert that we have *reaſon* for thinking, that there is no ſuch thing as *reaſon*; it is, certainly, no leſs ſo, to pretend, that we have reaſon to *doubt* whether reaſon is to be regarded; or, which comes to the ſame, whether our faculties are to be regarded. And, as far as it is acknowledged there is no reaſon to doubt, ſo far it will be ridiculous to pretend to doubt.

Theſe obſervations might be ſufficient on this ſubject, for they ſhew us that the point in debate is a point we are obliged to take for granted, and which is not capable of being queſtioned. But yet, however trifling it may ſeem after what has been ſaid, it will be of ſome uſe to point out more particularly the meaning of this enquiry, "Do not "our faculties always deceive us?" And to ſhew what the evidence really is which we have for the contrary.

Let it be conſidered then farther, that it is impoſſible what is not *true*, ſhould be *perceived*.—Now, it is certain, that there is a great variety of truths which we *think* we perceive; and, the whole queſtion, conſequently, is, whether we *really* perceive them, or not. The exiſtence of abſolute truth is ſuppoſed in the objection. Suſpicion of our faculties and fear of being deceived evidently imply it; nor can we deny, that it exiſts, without contradicting ourſelves; for it would be to aſſert, that it is true, that nothing is true. The ſame may be ſaid of *doubting* whether there is any thing true; for doubting denotes a heſitation or ſuſpenſe of the mind about the truth of what is doubted of; and, therefore, a tacit acknowledgment that there

there is ſomewhat true. Take away this, and there is no idea of it left *. So impoſſible is univerſal ſcepticiſm; and ſo neceſſarily does truth remain, even after we have taken it away. There being then truth perceivable, we are unavoidably led to believe, that we *may*, and that, in many inſtances, we *do* perceive it. But what I meant here to obſerve was, that to doubt of the rectitude of our faculties, is to doubt, whether our reaſon is not ſo formed and ſituated, as to miſrepreſent every object of ſcience to us; whether we ever *know*, or only *imagine* we know; whether, for example, we *actually perceive*, or only *fancy* that we perceive a circle to be *different* from a triangle, or the whole to be *bigger* than a part.

As far as we cannot doubt of theſe things, or find ourſelves forced to think we *perceive* them; ſo far we cannot doubt our faculties: So far we are forced to think them right.—It appears, therefore, that we have all the reaſon for believing our faculties, which we have for aſſenting to any ſelf-evident propoſitions; or for believing that we have any

* Thus ignorance implies ſomething to be known, and doubting about the way to a place, that there is a way.

real perceptions.—Whatever we perceive, we perceive as it *is*; and to perceive nothing as it is, is to perceive nothing at all. A mind cannot be without ideas, and as far as it has ideas they muſt be *true* ideas; a *wrong* idea of an object being the ſame with *no* idea of it, or the idea of ſome *other* object.

Obſervations of this kind may ſhew us the truth of the following concluſions.

Firſt, No being can be made who ſhall perceive falſehood. What is falſe, is nothing. Error is always the effect, not of perception, but of the want of it. As far as our perceptions go, they muſt correſpond to the truth of things.

Secondly, No being can be made who ſhall have *different* ideas, and yet not ſee them *different*. This would be to *have* them, and at the ſame time not to have them *.

There

* We may miſ-name our ideas, or imagine that an idea preſent at one time in our minds, is the ſame with one different from it, that was preſent at another. But no one can conceive, that a being, contemplating at the *ſame* time two ideas, can then think them not two but the ſame. He cannot have two ideas before his mind without being *conſcious* of it; and he cannot be *conſcious* of

There can, therefore, be no rational beings, who do not aſſent to all the truths which are included in the apprehended difference between ideas.—Thus; To have the ideas of a whole and a part, is the ſame with ſeeing the one to be *greater* than the other. To have the ideas of two figures, and an exact co-incidence between them when laid on one another, is the ſame with ſeeing them to be *equal*. The like may be obſerved of many of the truths which we make out by demonſtration; for demonſtration is only the ſelf-evident application of ſelf-evident principles.

In a word; either there are truths, which we are forced to think we know, or there are not. None probably will aſſert the latter; and declare ſeriouſly, there is nothing they find themſelves under any neceſſity of believing. Were there any ſuch perſons they would be incapable of being reaſoned with; nor would it be to any purpoſe to tell them, that this very declaration gives itſelf the lye.—If, therefore, there are truths which

of it, without knowing them to be different, and having a complete view and diſcernment of them, as far as they are *his* ideas.

which we *think* we perceive, it is the greateſt folly to pretend, at the ſame time, to doubt of the rectitude of our underſtandings with reſpect to them; that is, to *doubt* whether we perceive them or not.—Thinking we are right, believing, and thinking our faculties right, are one and the ſame. He that ſays, he doubts whether his eyes are not ſo made as always to deceive him, cannot without contradicting himſelf, ſay, he *believes* he ever ſees any external object. If we have a neceſſary determination to believe at all, we have a neceſſary determination to believe our faculties; and in the degree we *believe* them, we cannot *diſtruſt* them. An expreſſion then which has been uſed ſhould be inverted, and inſtead of ſaying, "upon ſuppoſition "my faculties are duly made, I am ſure of "ſuch and ſuch things;" it ſhould be ſaid, "I am ſure of ſuch and ſuch truths; and, "therefore, I am in the ſame degree ſure "my faculties inform me rightly."

Shall it ſtill be objected; "I have found "myſelf miſtaken in *many* caſes; and how "ſhall I know but I may be ſo in *all?*"—I anſwer; look into yourſelf and examine your own conceptions. Clearneſs and diſtinctneſs of apprehenſion, as you have or want it,

it, will and muſt ſatisfy you; when you are right, and when it is poſſible you may be wrong. Do not you really know, that you are not deceived, when you think, that if equals are taken from equals, the remainders will be equal? Can you entertain the leaſt doubt, whether the body of the ſun is bigger than it appears to the naked eye? or is it any reaſon for queſtioning this, that you once may have thought otherwiſe? Is it reaſonable, becauſe you have judged wrong in *ſome caſes*, through ignorance, haſte, prejudice, or partial views, to ſuſpect that you judge wrong *in all caſes*, however clear? Becauſe, through bodily indiſpoſition or other cauſes, our ſenſes *ſometimes* miſrepreſent outward objects to us, are they *for ever* to be diſcredited? Becauſe we ſometimes dream, muſt it be doubtful whether we are ever awake? Becauſe one man impoſed upon us, are we to conclude that no faith is due to any human teſtimony? or becauſe our memories have deceived us with reſpect to ſome events, muſt we queſtion whether we remember right what happened the laſt moment *.

But

* Concluſions of this ſort, (ſtrange as they may ſeem) have been actually drawn; and it has been aſſert-

ed,

But let it, for this or any other reaſon, be granted *poſſible*, that all our recollections are wrong, all our opinions falſe, and all our knowledge deluſion; ſtill there will be only

ed, that becauſe in adding together a long ſeries of numbers, we are liable to err, we cannot be ſure that we are right in the addition of the ſmalleſt numbers; and, therefore, not in reckoning twice two to be four.

Another ſceptical argument which has been inſiſted on, is this. In every judgment we can form, beſides the uncertainty attending the original conſideration of the ſubject itſelf; there is another derived from the conſideration of the fallibility of our faculties, and the paſt inſtances in which we have been miſtaken; to which muſt be added a third uncertainty, derived from the poſſibility of error in this eſtimation we make of the fidelity of our faculties; and to this a fourth of the ſame kind, and ſo on *in infinitum*; till at laſt the firſt evidence, by a conſtant diminution of it, muſt be reduced to nothing. See Mr. *Hume*'s *Treatiſe of Human Nature*, Vol. I. p. 315, &c. As much of this ſtrange reaſoning as is not above my comprehenſion, proves juſt the reverſe of what was intended by it. For let it be acknowledged, that the conſideration of the fallability of our underſtandings, and the inſtances in which they have deceived us, neceſſarily diminiſhes our aſſurance of the rectitude of our ſentiments; the ſubſequent reflection on the uncertainty attending this judgment which we make of our faculties, diminiſhes not, but contributes to reſtore to its firſt ſtrength, our original aſſurance; becauſe the more precarious a judgment or probability unfavourable to another appears, the leſs muſt be its effect in weakening it.

only a bare *poſſibility* againſt all reaſon and evidence, and the whole weight and bent of our minds obliging us to think the contrary. It is not in our power to pay the leaſt regard to a ſimple *may be*, in oppoſition to *any* apparent evidence *, much leſs in oppoſition to the *ſtrongeſt*.—Let it be admitted farther, that there may be a ſet of rational beings in a ſtate of neceſſary and total deception, or to whom nothing of truth and reality ever appears; though this be abſolutely impoſſible, and the ſame, as I have before obſerved, with ſuppoſing them to be void of all intellectual perception, and inconſiſtent with the very idea of their exiſtence, as thinking and reaſonable beings; yet, granting this, we cannot help thinking, that it is not the caſe with *us*; and that ſuch beings can by no means think and perceive as we do.

In

* How trifling then is it to alledge againſt any thing, for which there appears to be an overbalance of evidence; that, did we know more of the caſe, *perhaps* we might ſee equal evidence for the contrary. It is always a full anſwer to this, to ſay; *perhaps* not.—What we are wholly unacquainted with, may, for aught we know, make as much *for* any of our opinions, as *againſt* them.

In a word: What things *ſeem* to us, we muſt take them to *be*; and whatever our faculties inform us of, we muſt give credit to.—A great deal, therefore, of the ſcepticiſm, which ſome have profeſſed and defended, can be nothing but affectation and ſelf-deception.

I ſhall conclude this chapter with a few obſervations on the general grounds of belief and aſſent. Theſe may be all comprehended under the three following heads.

The firſt is immediate conſciouſneſs or FEELING. It is abſurd to aſk a reaſon for our believing what we *feel*, or are inwardly conſcious of. A thinking being muſt neceſſarily have a capacity of diſcovering ſome things in this way. It is from hence particularly we acquire the knowledge of our own exiſtence, and of the ſeveral operations, paſſions, and ſenſations of our minds. And it is alſo under this head I would comprehend the information we derive from our powers of recollection or memory.

The *ſecond* ground of belief is INTUITION; by which I mean the mind's ſurvey of its own ideas, and the relations between them, and the notice it takes of what is or is not true

true and falſe, conſiſtent and inconſiſtent, poſſible and impoſſible in the natures of things. It is to this, as has been explained at large in the firſt chapter, we owe our belief of all ſelf-evident truths; our ideas of the general, abſtract affections and relations of things; our moral ideas, and whatſoever elſe we diſcover, without making uſe of any proceſs of reaſoning.—It is on this power of intuition, eſſential, in ſome degree or other, to all rational minds, that the whole poſſibility of all reaſoning is founded. To it the laſt appeal is ever made. Many of its perceptions are capable, by attention, of being rendered more clear; and many of the truths diſcovered by it, may be illuſtrated by an advantageous repreſentation of them, or by being viewed in particular lights; but ſeldom will admit of proper proof.—Some truths there muſt be, which can appear only by their own light, and which are incapable of proof; otherwiſe nothing could be proved, or known; in the ſame manner as, if there were no letters, there could be no words, or if there were no ſimple and undefinable ideas, there could be no complex ideas.—I might mention many inſtances of truths diſcernible no other way than

intuitively,

intuitively, which learned men have ſtrangely confounded and obſcured, by ſuppoſing them ſubjects of *reaſoning and deduction*. One of the moſt important inſtances, the ſubject of this treatiſe affords us; and another we have, in our notions of the neceſſity of a *cauſe* of whatever begins to exiſt, and our general ideas of *power and connexion* *: And, ſometimes, reaſon has been ridiculouſly employed to prove even our own exiſtence.

The *third* ground of belief is ARGUMENTATION *or* DEDUCTION. This we have recourſe to when intuition fails us; and it is, as juſt now hinted, highly neceſſary, that we carefully diſtinguiſh between theſe two, mark their differences and limits, and obſerve what information we owe to the one or the other of them.—Our ideas are ſuch, that, by comparing them amongſt themſelves, we can find out numberleſs truths concerning them, and, conſequently, concerning actually exiſtent objects, as far as correſpondent to them, which would be otherwiſe undiſcoverable. Thus, a particular relation between two ideas, which cannot de diſcerned by any immediate compariſon,

* See the ſecond ſection of the firſt chapter, p. 29, &c.

pariſon, may appear, to the greateſt ſatisfaction, by the help of a proper, intermediate idea, whoſe relation to each is either ſelf-evident, or made out by ſome precedent reaſoning.—It is very agreeable here to conſider, how one truth infers other truths; and what vaſt acceſſions of knowledge may ariſe from the addition of one new idea, by ſupplying us with a proper medium for diſcovering the relations of thoſe we had before; which diſcoveries might themſelves help to further diſcoveries, and theſe to yet further, and ſo on without end.—If one *new idea* may have this effect; what inconceivable improvements may we ſuppoſe poſſible to ariſe from the unfolding of one *new ſenſe* or *faculty*?

It would be needleſs to give any inſtances of knowledge derived from *Argumentation*. All is to be aſcribed to it, which we have not received from either of the preceding ſources.

It may be worth obſerving, that all we believe on any of theſe grounds is not equally evident to us. This is obvious with reſpect to the laſt, which ſupplies us with all the degrees of evidence, from that producing full certainty, to the loweſt proba-

bility. *Intuition*, likewiſe, is found in very various degrees. It is ſometimes clear and perfect, and ſometimes faint and obſcure. Several propoſitions in geometry would appear very likely to it, though we had no demonſtrations of them.—Neither do *conſciouſneſs*, *memory*, and *reflexion on ourſelves* convince us equally of all we diſcover by them. They give us the utmoſt aſſurance of our own exiſtence, and alſo our identity as far as clear and diſtinct recollection can reach; but they do not give the ſame aſſurance of a great deal that has paſſed within us, of the ſprings of our actions, and the particular nature, ends, tendencies, and workings of our paſſions and affections, which is ſufficiently proved by the diſputes on theſe ſubjects.

It may alſo be worth mentioning, that ſome things we diſcover only in one of theſe ways, and ſome in more, or in all of them. All that we now prove by *Reaſoning* might be ſtill equally thus proved, though it were in the ſame degree *intuitive* to us, that it may be to beings above us. Intuition is not always incompatible with argumentation, though, when perfect, it ſuperſedes it; and, when imperfect, is often incap-

able

able of receiving any aid from it; and, therefore, in such cases, ought to be rested entirely on its own evidence. Every process of reasoning is composed of intuitions, and all the several steps in it are so many distinct intuitions; which, when clear and unquestionable, produce *demonstration and certainty*; when otherwise, give rise to *opinion and probability*. Nothing would be a greater advantage to us, in the search of truth, than taking time often to resolve our reasonings into their constituent intuitions; and to observe carefully, what light and evidence attend each, and in what manner, and with what degree of force, they infer the conclusion. Such a custom of analysing our sentiments, and tracing them to their elements and principles, would prevent much error and confusion, and shew us what degree of assent is due to the conclusions we receive, and on what foundation our opinions really stand.

An instance of what is discovered in all the ways above-named, is the existence of matter. *Immediate feeling* discovers to us our own organs, and the modifications of them. These the soul perceives by being *present* with them.—We have the ideas of matter, and

of a material world; and we, therefore, ſee *intuitively* the *poſſibility* of their exiſtence; for *poſſibility* of exiſting is implied in the idea of every object; what is impoſſible being nothing, and no object of reflexion.—We are conſcious of certain impreſſions made upon us, and of certain notices tranſmitted to us from without, and know they are produced by ſome foreign cauſe. We touch a ſolid ſubſtance, and feel reſiſtance. We ſee certain images drawn on our organs of ſight, and know they are acted upon by *ſomething*. The reſiſtance made *may be* owing to a reſiſting body; and the ſcenes painted before us *may be* derived from a correſpondent, external ſcene, diſcovering itſelf to us by means of intermediate matter. Suppoſing an external world, in what better manner could the information of it be communicated to us? What is more incredible, than that all the notices conveyed to us by our ſenſes, and all the impreſſions made upon them, correſponding in all reſpects to the ſuppoſition of an external world, and confirming one another in numberleſs ways, ſhould be entirely viſionary and deluſive? It is, I own, ſtill *poſſible*, that matter may not exiſt. So likewiſe is it *poſſible*, that the

planets

planets may not be inhabited, though every particle of matter on the *earth* abounds with inhabitants; that gravity may not be the power that keeps them in their orbits, though it be certainly the power that keeps the *moon* in its orbit; and that we may be the *only* beings in the world, and the only productions of divine power, though the greateſt reaſon to conclude the contrary offers itſelf to us, from the conſideration barely of our own exiſtence, and the conſequent *poſſibility and likelihood* of the exiſtence of numberleſs other beings. Analogy and intuition, in theſe caſes, immediately inform us what is fact, and produce conviction which we cannot reſiſt.—In ſhort, it is *ſelf-evident*, that a *material world*, anſwerable to our ideas, and to what we feel and ſee, is *poſſible*. We have no reaſon to think that it does not exiſt. Every thing appears as if it did exiſt; and againſt the reality of its exiſtence there is nothing but a bare poſſibility againſt actual feeling, and all the evidence which our circumſtances and condition, as embodied ſpirits, ſeem capable of.

It is well known what controverſies have of late been raiſed on this ſubject; ſome denying the exiſtence of a material world;

while others, not finding it poſſible ſeriouſly to doubt, reſolve their conviction into a determination given us to believe, which cannot be accounted for. I ſhould go too far out of my way, were I to ſay much more of the nature and grounds of our conviction in this inſtance. I ſhall therefore only obſerve farther, that the ſame principles on which the exiſtence of *matter* is oppoſed, lead us equally to deny the exiſtence of *ſpiritual* beings. And thoſe who reject the one, while they believe the other, ſhould tell us, "on what grounds they believe there exiſt "any beings whatſoever beſides themſelves."

This diſpute, after all, turns chiefly on the queſtion; whether matter, conſidered as ſomething actually exiſting *without the mind* and *independent of its perceptions*, be *poſſible*, or not? For there are few, probably, who will deny its exiſtence for any reaſon beſides an apprehenſion of the impoſſibility of it, in any other ſenſe, than as an idea, or ſenſation in the mind.—One would think that there can be no occaſion for ſpending time in refuting this. What is indiſputable, if it be not ſo, that whatever is *conceivable* cannot be *impoſſible?* What pretence can there

there be for asserting, that *figure*, *motion*, and *solid extension* are *sensations*, which cannot, any more than *pleasure* and *pain*, have any real existence *without the mind*, that will not imply the same of the *object* of every idea, and of *all that is commonly thought to have a distinct and continued existence?*—But it is time to proceed to what has a nearer relation to the design of this treatise *.

* See Note E at the Conclusion.

CHAP. VI.

Of Fitneſs, and Moral Obligation, and the various Forms of Expreſſion, which have been uſed by different Writers in explaining Morality.

AFTER the account that has been given of the nature and origin of our ideas of morality; it will be eaſy to perceive the meaning of ſeveral terms and phraſes, which are commonly uſed in ſpeaking on this ſubject.

Fitneſs and *unfitneſs* moſt frequently denote the congruity or incongruity, aptitude or inaptitude of any means to accompliſh an end. But when applied to actions, they generally ſignify the ſame with *right* and *wrong*; nor is it often hard to determine in which of theſe ſenſes theſe words are to be underſtood. It is worth obſerving, that *fitneſs*,

neſs, in the former ſenſe, is equally undefinable with *fitneſs* in the latter; or, that it is as impoſſible to expreſs, in any other than ſynonymous words, what we mean, when we ſay of certain objects, "that they have "a *fitneſs* to one another; or are *fit* to an- "ſwer certain purpoſes," as it is when we ſay, "reverencing the Deity is *fit*, or bene- "ficence is *fit* to be practiſed." In the firſt of theſe inſtances, none can avoid owning the abſurdity of making an arbitrary ſenſe the ſource of the idea of *fitneſs*, and of concluding that it ſignifies nothing real in objects, and that no one thing can be properly the *means* of another. In both caſes the term *fit*, ſignifies a ſimple perception of the underſtanding.

Morally good and *evil*, *reaſonable* and *unreaſonable*, are epithets alſo commonly applied to actions, evidently meaning the ſame with *right* and *wrong*, *fit* and *unfit*.

Approving an action is the ſame with diſcerning it to be *right*; as *aſſenting* to a propoſition is the ſame with diſcerning it to be *true*.

But *Obligation* is the term moſt neceſſary to be here conſidered; and to the explication

tion of it, the beſt part of this chapter ſhall be devoted.

Obligation to action, and *rightneſs* of action, are plainly coincident and identical; ſo far ſo, that we cannot form a notion of the one, without taking in the other. This may appear to any one upon conſidering, whether he can point out any difference between what is *right*, *meet* or *fit* to be done, and what *ought* to be done *. It is not indeed plainer, that figure implies ſomething figured, ſolidity reſiſtance, or an effect a cauſe, than it is that *rightneſs* implies *oughtneſs* (if I may be allowed this word) or *obligatorineſs*. And as eaſily can we conceive of figure without extenſion, or motion without a change of place, as that it can be *fit* for us to do an action, and yet that it may not be what we *ſhould* do, what it is our *duty* to do, or what we are under an *obligation* to do.—*Right*, *fit*, *ought*, *ſhould*, *duty*, *obligation*, convey, then, ideas neceſſarily including one another. From hence it follows,

Firſt,

* *Obligatory* anſwers to *opertet*, *decet*, *debitum*, in *Latin*; and to δει, δεον εϛι, θεμιτον καθηκον, δικαιον in *Greek*.

Firſt, That virtue, *as ſuch*, has a real obligatory power antecedently to all poſitive laws, and independently of all will; for obligation, we ſee, is involved in the very nature of it. To affirm, that the performance of that, which, to omit, would be wrong, is not obligatory, unleſs conducive to private good or enjoined by a ſuperior power, is a manifeſt contradiction. It is to ſay, that it is not true, that a thing is what it is; or that we are *obliged* to do what we *ought* to do; unleſs it be the object of a command, or, in ſome manner, privately uſeful.——If there are any actions fit to be done by an agent, beſides ſuch as tend to his own happineſs, thoſe actions, by the terms, are *obligatory*, independently of their influence on his happineſs.—Whatever it is *wrong* to do, that it is our *duty* not to do, whether enjoined or not by any poſitive law *.—I cannot conceive

* It is obvious, that this is very different from ſaying (what it would be plainly abſurd to ſay) that every action, the performance of which, in certain circumſtances is wrong, will continue wrong, let the circumſtances be ever ſo much altered, or by whatever authority it is commanded.

ceive of any thing much more evident than this.—It appears, therefore, that thoſe who maintain that all obligation is to be deduced from poſitive laws, the Divine will, or ſelf-love, aſſert what (if they mean any thing contrary to what is here ſaid) implies, that the words *right* and *juſt* ſtand for no real and diſtinct characters of actions; but ſignify merely what is *willed* and *commanded*, or conducive to private advantage, whatever that be; ſo that any thing may be both right and wrong, morally good and evil, at the ſame time and in any circumſtances, as it may be commanded or forbidden by different laws and wills; and any the moſt pernicious effects will become juſt, and fit to be produced by any being, if but the ſmalleſt degree of clear advantage or pleaſure may reſult to him from them.

Thoſe who ſay, nothing can oblige but the will of God, generally reſolve the power of this to oblige to the annexed rewards and puniſhments. And thus, in reality, they ſubvert entirely the independent natures of moral good and evil; and are forced to maintain, that nothing can *oblige*, but the proſpect of pleaſure to be obtained, or pain to be avoided. If this be true, it follows that

that *vice* is, properly, no more than *imprudence*; that nothing is right or wrong, juſt or unjuſt, any farther than it affects ſelf-intereſt; and that a being, independently and completely happy, cannot have any moral perceptions. The juſtneſs of theſe inferences cannot be denied by one, who will attend to the coincidence here inſiſted on between obligation and virtue.

But to purſue this point farther; let me aſk, would a perſon who either believes there is no God, or that he does not concern himſelf with human affairs, feel no *moral obligations*, and therefore not be at all *accountable?* Would one, who ſhould happen not to be convinced, that virtue tends to his happineſs here or hereafter, be releaſed from every *bond* of duty and morality? Or, would he, if he believed no future ſtate, and that, in any inſtance, virtue was againſt his *preſent* intereſt, be truly *obliged*, in theſe inſtances, to be wicked?—Theſe conſequences muſt follow, if obligation depends entirely on the knowledge of the will of a ſuperior, or on the connexion between actions and private intereſt.—But, indeed, the very expreſſion, *virtue tends to our happineſs*, and the ſuppoſition that, in certain caſes, it may

may be inconſiſtent with it, imply that it may exiſt independently of any connexion with private intereſt; and would have no ſenſe, if it ſignified only the relation of actions to private intereſt. For then, to ſuppoſe virtue to be inconſiſtent with our happineſs, would be the ſame with ſuppoſing, that what is *advantageous* to us, may be *diſadvantageous* to us.

It is ſtrange to find thoſe who plead for ſelf-intereſt, as the only ground of moral obligation, aſſerting that, when virtue claſhes with preſent enjoyments, all motives to it ceaſe, ſuppoſing no future ſtate. For, upon their principles, the truth is not, that all motives to practiſe virtue, would, in theſe circumſtances ceaſe, but that virtue itſelf would ceaſe; nay, would be changed into vice; and what would otherwiſe have been fit and juſt, become unlawful and wrong: For, being under an obligation in theſe circumſtances not to do what appeared to us fit, it could not in reality *be* fit; we could not do it without violating our duty, and therefore certainly, not without doing wrong. Thus, all who find not their *preſent* account in virtue, would, upon theſe principles (ſetting aſide another world) be under

under an obligation to be wicked. Or, to ſpeak more properly, the ſubject-matter of virtue and vice (that is, the relation of particular actions to private good) would be altered; what was before *wickneſs* would become *virtue*, and what was before *virtue* would become *wickedneſs*.—It ſhould be carefully minded that, as far as another world creates *obligation*, it creates *virtue*; for it is an abſurdity too groſs to be maintained, that we may act contrary to our obligations, and yet act virtuouſly.

Another obſervation worthy our notice in this place, is, that rewards and puniſhments ſuppoſe, in the very idea of them, moral obligation, and are founded upon it. They do not *make* it, but *enforce* it. They are the *ſanctions* of virtue, and not its *efficients*. A reward ſuppoſes ſomething done to *deſerve* it, or a conformity to *obligation ſubſiſting previouſly to it*; and puniſhment is always inflicted on account of ſome breach of *obligation*. Were we under no obligations, antecedently to the propoſal of rewards and puniſhments, it would be a contradiction to ſuppoſe us ſubjects capable of them.—A perſon without any light beſides that of nature, and ſuppoſed ignorant of a future

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ſtate of rewards and puniſhments and the will of the Deity, might diſcover theſe by reaſoning from his natural notions of morality and duty. But were the latter dependent on the former, and not *vice verſa*; this could not be ſaid, nor ſhould we have any principles left, from which to learn the will of the Deity, and the conditions of his favour to us.

Secondly, From the account given of *obligation*, it follows that *rectitude* is a *law* as well as a *rule* to us; that it not only *directs*, but *binds* all, as far as it is perceived.—With reſpect to its being a *rule*, we may obſerve, that a rule of action ſignifying ſome meaſure or ſtandard to which we are to conform our actions, or ſome information we poſſeſs concerning what we ought to do, there can, in this ſenſe, be no *other* rule of action; all beſides, to which this name can be properly given, implying it, or ſignifying only helps to the diſcovery of it. To perceive or to be informed how it is *right* to act, is the very notion of a *direction* to act. And it muſt be added, that it is ſuch a direction as implies *authority*, and which we cannot diſregard or neglect without remorſe and pain. Reaſon is the guide, the

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natural and *authoritative* guide of a rational being. Where he has no discernment of right and wrong, there, and there only, is he (morally speaking) *free*. But where he has this discernment, where *moral good* appears to him, and he cannot avoid pronouncing concerning an action, that it is fit to be done, and evil to omit it; here he is tied in the most strict and absolute manner, in bonds that no power in nature can dissolve, and from which he can at no time, or in any single instance, break loose, without offering the most unnatural violence to himself; without making an inroad into his own soul, and immediately pronouncing his own sentence.

That is properly a *law* to us, which we always and unavoidably feel and own ourselves *obliged* to obey; and which, as we obey or disobey it, is attended with the immediate sanctions of inward triumph and self-applause, or of inward shame and self-reproach, together with the secret apprehensions of the favour or displeasure of a superior righteous power, and the anticipations of *future* rewards, and punishments. —That has proper *authority* over us, to which, if we refuse submission, we transgress

greſs our duty, incur guilt, and expoſe ourſelves to juſt vengeance. All this is certainly true of our moral judgment, and contained in the idea of it.

Rectitude then, or virtue is a LAW *. And it is the *firſt* and *ſupreme* law, to which all other laws owe their force, on which they depend, and in virtue of which alone they oblige. It is an *univerſal* LAW. The whole creation is ruled by it: under it men and all rational beings ſubſiſt. It is the ſource and guide of all the actions of the Deity himſelf, and on it his throne and government are founded. It is an *unalterable and indiſpenſible* LAW. The repeal, ſuſpenſion or even *relaxation* of it, once for a moment, in any part of the univerſe, cannot be conceived without a contradiction. Other laws have had a date; a time when they were enacted, and became of force. They are confined to particular places, reſt on precarious foundations, may loſe their vigour, grow obſolete with time, and become uſeleſs and neglected. Nothing like this can be true of this law. It has no date. It never was made or enacted. It is prior to all things. It

* Το μεν ορθον νομου εϛι βασιλικου. *Plat. Minos.*

It is self-valid and self-originated; and must for ever retain its usefulness and vigour, without the possibility of diminution or abatement. It is coeval with eternity; as unalterable as necessary, everlasting truth; as independent as the existence of God; and as sacred and awful as his nature and perfections.—The *authority* it possesses is native and essential to it, underived and absolute. It is superior to all other authority, and the basis and parent of all other authority. It is indeed self-evident that, properly speaking, there is no other authority; nothing else that can claim our obedience, or that *ought* to guide and rule heaven and earth.—It is, in short, the *one* authority in nature, the same in all times and in all places; or, in one word, the DIVINE authority.

Thirdly, From the account given of obligation, it appears how absurd it is to enquire, what *obliges* us to practise virtue? as if obligation was no part of the idea of virtue, but something adventitious and foreign to it; that is, as if what was *due*, might not be our *duty*, or what was *wrong*, *unlawful*; or as if it might not be true, that what it is *fit* to do we *ought* to do, and that what we *ought* to do, we are *obliged* to

do.—To aſk, why are we *obliged* to practiſe virtue, to abſtain from what is wicked, or perform what is juſt, is the very ſame as to aſk, why we are *obliged* to do what we are *obliged* to do?—It is not poſſible to avoid wondering at thoſe, who have ſo unaccountably embarraſſed themſelves, on a ſubject that one would think was attended with no difficulty; and who, becauſe they cannot find any thing in *virtue and duty themſelves*, which can induce us to pay a regard to them in our practice, fly to ſelf-love, and maintain that from hence alone are derived all inducement and obligation.

Fourthly, From what has been obſerved, it may appear, in what ſenſe obligation is aſcribed to God. It is no more than aſcribing to him the perception of rectitude, or ſaying, that there are certain ends, and certain meaſures in the adminiſtration of the world, which he approves, and which are *better* to be purſued than others.—Great care, however, ſhould be taken, what language we here uſe. *Obligation* is a word to which many perſons have affixed ſeveral ideas, which ſhould by no means be retained when we ſpeak of God. Our language and our conceptions, whenever he is the ſubject

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of them, are *always* extremely defective and inadequate, and *often* very erroneous.—There are many who think it abſurd and ſhocking to attribute any thing of *obligation* or *law* to a being who is neceſſarily ſufficient and independent, and to whom nothing can be prior or ſuperior. How, I conceive, we are to frame our apprehenſions on this ſubject, has already, in ſome meaſure, appeared. It ſhould, methinks, be enough to ſatisfy ſuch perſons, that the obligations aſcribed to the Deity ariſe entirely from and exiſt in his own nature; and that the eternal, unchangeable LAW, by which it has been ſaid, he is directed in all his actions, is no other than HIMSELF; *his own infinite, eternal, all perfect underſtanding.*

Fifthly, What has been ſaid alſo ſhews us, on what the obligations of religion and the Divine will are founded. They are plainly branches of univerſal rectitude. Our obligation to obey God's will means nothing, but that obedience is *due* to it, or that it is *right and fit* to comply with it. What an abſurdity is it then, to make obligation *ſubſequent* to the Divine will, and the *creature* of it? For why, upon this ſuppoſition, does not *all* will oblige equally? If there be any

thing which gives the preference to one will above another; that, by the terms, is *moral rectitude.* What would any laws or will of any being ſignify, what influence could they have on the determinations of a moral agent, was there no good reaſon for complying with them, no obligation to regard them, no *antecedent right* of command?—To affirm that we are *obliged* in any caſe, but not in virtue of *reaſon and right*, is to ſay, that in that caſe we are not obliged at all.—Beſides, nothing could be ever commanded by the Deity, was there no prior reaſon for commanding it. To which add, that one ground of our obligation to obey His will is this, its being under the direction of reaſon, or always a wiſe, righteous, and good will. Thus, therefore, on all accounts, and in every view of things, do will and law preſuppoſe reaſon and right. And it is upon the whole, unqueſtionable, that if we take away the latter, the former loſe all ſupport and efficacy; and that were there nothing in itſelf juſt and obligatory, nothing could be made ſo by law, will, commands, compacts, or any means whatever. See obſervations to the ſame purpoſe, Chap. I. at the concluſion.

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One cannot but obſerve on this occaſion, how the ideas of right and wrong force themſelves upon us, and in ſome form or other, always remain, even when we think we have annihilated them. Thus, after we have ſuppoſed all actions and ends to be in themſelves indifferent, it is natural to conceive, that it is *right* to give ourſelves up to the guidance of unreſtrained inclination, and *wrong* to be careful of our actions, or to give ourſelves any trouble in purſuing any ends. Or, if with *Hobbs* and the orator in *Plato*'s *Gorgias*, we ſuppoſe that the ſtrongeſt may oppreſs the weakeſt, and take to themſelves whatever they can ſeize; or that unlimited power confers an unlimited right; this plainly ſtill leaves us in poſſeſſion of the idea of *right*, and only eſtabliſhes *another ſpecies* of it.—In like manner, when we ſuppoſe all the obligations of morality to be derived from laws and compacts, we at the ſame time find ourſelves under a neceſſity of ſuppoſing ſomething *before* them, not abſolutely indifferent in reſpect of choice; ſomething good and evil, right and wrong, which gave riſe to them and occaſion for them; and which, after they are made, makes them regarded.

But to return to the ſubject under conſideration. The neceſſary perfections of the Deity; the infinite excellencies of his nature as the fountain of reaſon and wiſdom; the entire dependence of all beings upon him, and their deriving from his bounty exiſtence and all its bleſſings and hopes—from hence, and not merely from his almighty power, ariſes his SOVEREIGN AUTHORITY. Theſe are the reaſons that render him the proper object of our ſupreme homage, conſtitute his right of government, veſt him with univerſal and juſt dominion, and make it the firſt duty of the whole intelligent world to obey, to pleaſe, and honour him in all they think and do.—Thoſe who will allow of no other motive to regard the Deity, no other meaning of the obligation to obey him, beſides what is implied in his power to make us happy or miſerable, maintain what it is wonderful how any human mind can ſeriouſly embrace. They maintain, that were it poſſible to ſuppoſe that we had nothing to hope or fear from him, we ſhould not have the leaſt deſire of his approbation, or the leaſt concern about his expectations from us, or any reaſon for paying him any kind of regard; that

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ſetting aſide the conſideration of our own intereſt, it is entirely indifferent what our diſpoſitions and behaviour are with reſpect to him; that his nature, attributes and benefits, however glorious, are, in themſelves, incapable of having any effect upon any rational nature; and that though (retaining power) we were ever ſo much to change or reverſe his character, it would ſtill be equally incumbent upon us to love, revere, and obey him, to reſign our wills to his, and to endeavour to approve ourſelves to him.

Farther, what has been ſaid will ſhew us, what judgment to form concerning ſeveral accounts and definitions, which have been given of obligation. It is eaſy here to perceive the perplexity ariſing from attempting to define words expreſſing ſimple perceptions of the mind.—An ingenious and able writer * defines obligation to be *a ſtate of the mind into which it is brought by perceiving a reaſon for action.* Let this definition be ſubſtituted wherever the words *duty*, *ſhould*, *obliged*, occur; and it

* *Mr. Balguy. See his tracts on the foundation of moral goodneſs and the law of truth.*

it will ſoon be ſeen how defective it is. The meaning of it is plainly, that obligation denotes that attraction or excitement which the mind feels upon perceiving right and wrong. But this is the *effect* of obligation perceived, rather than *obligation itſelf*. Beſides, it is proper to ſay, that the duty or obligation to act is a reaſon for acting; and then this definition will ſtand thus: *obligation is a ſtate of the mind into which it is brought by perceiving obligation to act.*—This author divides obligation into *external* and *internal*; by the former, meaning the excitement we feel to purſue pleaſure as *ſenſible agents*; and, by the latter, the excitement we feel to purſue virtue as *reaſonable and moral agents*. But, as merely ſenſible beings, we are incapable of obligation; otherwiſe it might be properly applied to brutes, which, I think, it never is. What, in theſe inſtances, produces confuſion, is not diſtinguiſhing between perception and the effect of it; between *obligation* and a *motive*. All motives are not obligations; though the contrary is true, that wherever there is obligation, there is alſo a motive to action.—Some perhaps, by *obligation*, may only mean ſuch a motive to act, as ſhall have

have the greateſt influence, and be moſt likely to determine us, and as far as this is all that is intended, it may be allowed, that the obligation to practiſe virtue depends greatly, as mankind are now ſituated, on its connexion with private intereſt, and the views of future rewards and puniſhments.

Obligation has, by ſeveral writers, been ſtyled, the *neceſſity of doing a thing in order to be happy* *. I have already taken ſufficient

* "The whole force of obligation (ſays Biſhop "*Cumberland* in his *treatiſe* of the laws of nature, chap. "v. ſect. ii.) is this, that the legiſlator hath annexed "to the obſervance of his laws, good, to the tranſgreſ- "ſion evil; and thoſe natural: In proſpect whereof "men are moved to perform actions, rather agreeing "than diſagreeing with the laws."—Ibid. ſect. 27. "I think that moral obligation may be thus univerſally "and properly defined. Obligation is that act of a "legiſlator, by which he declares that actions con- "formable to his law are neceſſary to thoſe for whom "the law is made. An action is then underſtood to "be neceſſary to a rational agent, when it is certainly "one of the cauſes neceſſarily required to that happi- "neſs, which he naturally and conſequently neceſſa- "rily deſires."—Again, ſect. xxxv. "I cannot con- "ceive any thing which could bind the mind of man "with any neceſſity (in which *Juſtinian*'s definition "places the force of obligation) except arguments "proving, that good or evil will proceed from our "actions."—The remarks which Mr. *Maxwell*, the tranſlator,

cient notice of the opinion from which this definition is derived; and therefore ſhall here

tranſlator, makes on theſe paſſages, are ſo good, that I cannot help tranſcribing ſome of them.—" If, ſays " he, this (that is, the neceſſity of the obſervance of the law as a means of our happineſs) " be the " whole of the law's obligation, the tranſgreſſion of " the law is not *unrighteouſneſs*, *ſin* and *crime*, but only " *imprudence* and *infelicity*, for the ſanction of the law " importeth no other evil. But the obligation or bond " of the law is the *jural reſtraint* which is expreſſed by " *non licet*, *you may not do it*; but becauſe a bare *non licet* " or prohibition is not ſufficient to enforce the law, " therefore the *ſin* and *puniſhment*, the *precept* and the " *ſanction* both concur to make the *jural reſtraint*, " which muſt be thus fully expreſſed, *on licet impune*, *you* " *may not do it with impunity*. But though ſin and " puniſhment are cloſely connected, yet the obligation " of *non licet*, *it may not be done*, is diſtinct from the " obligation of *non impune*, *not without impunity*, as ſin " and puniſhment are of diſtinct conſideration. But " a man is *bound*, both when he cannot do a thing " *without ſin*, and when he cannot do a thing *without* " *puniſhment*; and *both* theſe *obligations* are in every " law, and both concur to make the obligation of it. " But becauſe the obligation of *non licet*, is antecedent " to the obligation of *non impune*, the precept to the " ſanction, and the ſin is made by the law, the law " hath ſo much obligation, as to make the ſin before " the penalty is enacted; therefore, the law hath an " obligation antecedently to the ſanction of it. For

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here only aſk, what, if this be the only ſenſe of obligation, is meant when we ſay, a man

" every one is *bound* to avoid what is ſin, becauſe none " can have a right to do what is unrighteous.—No in- " genuous man looks upon himſelf as obliged to be " grateful to his benefactors, to love his wife and " children, or to love and honour his God and Sa- " viour, merely by the ſanction of rewards and " puniſhments. Is there no obligation on men from " right and wrong, due and undue, ſanctity and ſin, " righteouſneſs and wickedneſs, honeſty and diſhoneſ- " ty, conſcience or crime, virtue or villainy, but " merely from a prudent regard to their own happi- " neſs?—The vulgar ſay, *I am bound in duty, in juſtice, " in gratitude*; and the ſchools ſay, *that the obligation " of the law of nature is a bond of conſcience.*—It is not " poſſible to deduce a conſcientious obligation, merely " from a *politick and prudential regard to our own hap- " pineſs.*—The legiſlator annexes to his law the ſanc- " tion of the *good of pleaſure*, for the ſake of the *good " of virtue*, which the law enjoineth; this, therefore, " is the principle in the eſtimation of the lawgiver; " whoſe will, if it be made known, is, without a ſanc- " tion, a bond or obligation upon us; for we *owe* " obedience thereto, and every one is bound to pay " what he oweth." See the *Appendix to Cumberland's treatiſe of the laws of nature*, page 55.—" A virtuous " practice (ſays the ſame writer, page 83.) is, in the " nature and reaſon of the thing, indiſpenſably requi- " ſite in all intelligent agents, and is to them *matter of " law and obligation.* For *law* or *obligation* (in a large, " but very proper ſenſe) is nothing elſe, but a *non licet*, " or a boundary to licence."

a man is *obliged* to ſtudy his own happineſs? Is it not obvious that *obliged*, in this propoſition, ſignifies, not the neceſſity of doing a thing in order to be happy, which would make it ridiculous; but only, that it is *right* to ſtudy our own happineſs, and *wrong* to neglect it?

A very learned author * maintains, that moral obligation always denotes ſome object of will and law, or implies ſome obliger. Were this true; it would be mere jargon to mention our being *obliged* to obey the Divine will; and yet, this is as proper language as any we can uſe. But his meaning ſeems to be, that the word *obligation* ſignifies only the *particular fitneſs* of obeying the Divine will, and cannot properly be applied to any other fitneſs; which is reſtraining the ſenſe of the word, in a manner which the common uſe of it by no means warrants.

The ſenſe of obligation given by Dr. *Hutcheſon* †, agrees in ſome meaſure, with the account here given of it. Then, he ſays, a *perſon is obliged to an action, when every ſpectator, or he himſelf, upon reflexion, muſt approve*

* *See Dr. Warburton's Divine Legation, Vol. I. page 59.*

† *Illuſtrations on the Moral Senſe.* Sect. 1.

approve his action and diſapprove omitting it. This account, however, is not perfectly accurate; for though obligation to act, and reflex approbation and diſapprobation do, *in one* * *ſenſe*, always accompany and imply one another; yet they ſeem as different as an *act* and an *object* of the mind, or as perception and the truth perceived. It is not exactly the ſame to ſay, it is our *duty* to do a thing; and to ſay, we *approve* of doing it. The one is the quality of the action, the other the *diſcernment* of that quality. Yet, ſuch is the connexion between theſe, that it is

* The reaſon of adding this reſtriction is this. A man may, through involuntary error, approve of doing what he *ought* not to do, or think that to be his duty, which is really contrary to it; and yet it is too, in this caſe, really his duty to act agreeably to his judgment.—There are then two views of obligation, which, if not attended to, will be apt to produce confuſion.—*In one ſenſe*, a man's being *obliged* to act in a particular manner depends on his knowing it; and in *another ſenſe*, it does not. Was not the *former* true, we might be contracting guilt, when acting with the fulleſt approbation of our conſciences: And was not the *latter* true, it would not be ſenſe ever to ſpeak of *ſhewing* another what his *obligations* are, or how it is *incumbent upon him* to act.—This entirely coincides with the diſtinction of virtue into *abſolute* and *relative*, hereafter to be explained, *Chap.* VIII.

is not very neceſſary to diſtinguiſh them; and, in common language, the term *obligation* often ſtands for the ſenſe and judgment of the mind concerning what is fit or unfit to be done. It would, nevertheleſs, I imagine, prevent ſome confuſion, and keep our ideas more diſtinct and clear, to remember, that a man's conſciouſneſs that an action ought to be done, or the *judgment concerning obligation* and inducing or inferring it, cannot, properly ſpeaking, be *obligation itſelf*; and that, however variouſly and looſely this word may be uſed, its primary and original ſignification coincides with *rectitude* *.

I ſhall

* I obſerve that Dr. *Adams*, in an excellent Sermon on the *Nature and Obligation of Virtue*, agrees with me in the account he gives of obligation.—To the queſtion, in what does the obligation to virtue and right action conſiſt? he anſwers, "that *right* implies *duty* in its "idea; that to perceive an action to be right, is to ſee "a reaſon for doing it in the action itſelf, abſtracted "from all other conſiderations whatſoever; and that "this perception, this acknowledged rectitude in the "action, is the very eſſence of obligation, that which "commands the approbation and choice, and binds "the conſcience of every rational being," *page* 11.—"Nothing (he ſays, *p.* 14.) can bring us under an "obligation

I ſhall leave the reader to judge how far theſe remarks are applicable to what Dr. *Clarke* ſays on this head, who gives much the ſame account of obligation with that laſt mentioned; and ſome of whoſe words it may not be amiſs to quote. See his *Evidences of Natural and revealed Religion*, page 43, 6th Edit. "The judgment and conſcience of a man's own mind, concerning

 "the

"obligation to do what appears to our moral judgment "wrong. It may be ſuppoſed our intereſt to do this; "but it cannot be ſuppoſed our duty: For, I aſk, if ſome "power, which we are unable to reſiſt, ſhould aſſume "the command over us, and give us laws which are "unrighteous and unjuſt; ſhould we be under an obli-"gation to obey him? Should we not rather be "obliged to ſhake off the yoke, and to reſiſt ſuch uſur-"pation, if it were in our power? However then we "might be ſwayed by hope or fear; it is plain, that "we are under an obligation to right, which is ante-"cedent, and, in order and nature, ſuperior to all "other. Power may compel, intereſt may bribe, plea-"ſure may perſuade; but reaſon only can oblige. "This is the only authority which rational beings "can own, and to which they owe obedience."—The coincidence which, in other inſtances, I have found between the ſentiments of this moſt judicious writer, on the ſubject of virtue, and thoſe delivered in this treatiſe, has very agreeably ſurprized me, and given me a degree of confidence in ſome of the opinions I have maintained, which I ſhould otherwiſe have wanted.

" the reaſonableneſs and fitneſs of the thing,
" that his actions ſhould be conformed to
" ſuch or ſuch a rule or law, is the trueſt
" and formalleſt obligation, even more pro-
" perly and ſtrictly ſo, than any opinion
" whatſoever, of the authority of the giver
" of a law, or any regard he may have to
" its ſanctions by rewards and puniſhments;
" for whoever acts contrary to this ſenſe
" and conſcience of his own mind, is neceſ-
" ſarily ſelf-condemned; and the greateſt and
" ſtrongeſt of all obligations, is that which
" a man cannot break through without
" condemning himſelf.—The original obli-
" gation of all is the eternal reaſon of
" things; that reaſon which God himſelf,
" who has no ſuperior to direct him, and
" to whoſe happineſs nothing can be added,
" nor any thing diminiſhed from it, yet
" conſtantly obliges himſelf to govern the
" world by.—So far, therefore, as men are
" conſcious of what is right and wrong, ſo
" far they are under an obligation to act
" accordingly; and, conſequently, that eter-
" nal rule of right which I have been
" hitherto deſcribing, it is evident, ought
" as indiſpenſably to govern men's actions,
" as it cannot but neceſſarily determine their
" aſſent."

" aſſent." Page 51, he ſays, " The minds " of men cannot but acknowledge the rea- " ſonableneſs and fitneſs of their governing " all their actions by the rule of right or " equity: And this aſſent is a formal obli- " gation upon every man actually and con- " ſtantly to conform himſelf to that rule."

Dr. *Butler*, likewiſe, in his Sermons on *Human Nature*, and the explanatory remarks upon them in the *Preface*, inſiſts ſtrongly on the obligation implied in reflex approbation; the ſupremacy belonging to the principle of reflexion within us; and the authority and right of ſuperintendency which are conſtituent parts of the idea of it. From this incomparable writer, I beg leave to borrow one obſervation more of conſiderable importance, on this ſubject.

Every being endowed with reaſon, and conſcious of right and wrong, is, as ſuch, neceſſarily a *law* to himſelf *: It follows, therefore, that the greateſt degree of ignorance or ſcepticiſm poſſible, with reſpect to the tendencies of virtue, the authority of the Deity, a future ſtate, and the rewards

* I have not here copied Dr. *Butler*, but given the ſenſe of his obſervations in other words. See the *Preface* to his ſermons, *p.* 20.

and punishments to be expected in it, leaves us still truly and fully accountable, guilty, and punishable, if we transgress this law; and will, by no means, exempt us from justice, or be of any avail to excuse or save us, should it prove true that such authority and future state really exist. For what makes an agent ill-deserving is not any opinion he may have about a superior power, or positive sanctions; but his doing wrong, and acting contrary to the conviction of his mind. "What renders obnoxious to punishment, is not the fore-knowledge of "it, but merely violating a known obligation."

There is an objection to what has been now said of obligation, which deserves to be considered *.—It may be asked, "Are "there not many actions, of which it cannot be said, that we are *bound* to perform "them, which yet are *right* to be performed; "and the actual performance of which appears to us even more amiable, than if "they had been strictly our duty; such as "requital of good for evil, and acts of generosity and kindness?"

I answer,

* See *Essays on the Principles of Morality and natural Religion*, Part I. Essay ii. Chap. 3.

I answer, that allowing this, the most that can follow from it is, not that rectitude does not imply obligation, but that it does not imply it absolutely and universally, or so far as that there can be no sense in which actions are denominated *right*, which does not carry in it *obligation*. The nature of rectitude may vary, according to the objects or actions to which it is ascribed. All right actions are not so in precisely the same sense; and it might, with little prejudice to what is above asserted, be granted, that some things are right in such a sense as yet not to be our indispenable duty. But then let it be remembered: That it holds universally and inconteſtably, that whatever is right in such a sense, as that the omission of it would be wrong, is always and indispensably obligatory. And, in the next place, that though the idea of *rightness* may be more general than that of *fitness*, *duty*, or *obligation*; so that there may be instances to which we apply the one, but not the other; yet this cannot be said of *wrong*. The idea of this, and of obligation, are certainly of the same extent; I mean, that though there may be cases in which it cannot be said, that what we approve as right,

ought to have been done; yet there are no cases in which it cannot be said, that what is wrong to be done, or omitted, *ought not* to be done or omitted.

But, not to dwell on this: It will be found on careful enquiry that the objection now mentioned does not require any such restrictions of what has been advanced as, at first sight, may appear to be necessary; and the following observations will, perhaps, shew this.

In the *first* place, Beneficence, *in general*, is undoubtedly a duty; and it is only with respect to the *particular* acts and instances of it that we are at liberty. A certain person, suppose, performs an act of kindness to another: We say, he *might* not have done it, or he was not *obliged* to do it; that is, he was not obliged to do this *particular* kind act. But to be kind in some instances or other; to do all the good he can to his fellow-creatures, every one is obliged; and we necessarily look upon that person as blameworthy and guilty who aims not at this; but contents himself with barely abstaining from injury and mischief. A certain part of our fortunes and labour we *owe* to those about us, and *should* employ in doing good; but

but the particular objects and methods of beneficence are not abſolutely fixed. Here we are left to our own choice, and may not be in any ſenſe bound; that is, there may be nothing in any particular objects or methods of beneficence, which render it fit and right *they* ſhould be choſen rather than others. If a man endeavours to do all the good which is ſuitable to his ſtation and abilities, we never condemn him for not doing it in a particular way, or for rejecting particular objects that are offered to him; except theſe objects are ſuch, that it is right he ſhould *prefer* them. As far as this happens, ſo far, even here, *duty* takes place. Thus, *cæteris paribus*, it is right, friends, relations, and benefactors ſhould be preferred to ſtrangers; and, whoever does otherwiſe, acts contrary to his *duty*.

Again; the preciſe limits of ſome general duties cannot be determined by us. No one can tell *exactly* to what degree he ought to be beneficent, and how far he is obliged to exert himſelf for the benefit of other men. No perſon, for inſtance, can determine accurately, how far, in many caſes, his own good ought to give way to that of another, what number of diſtreſſed perſons he ought

to relieve, or what portion *preciſely* of his fortune he ought to lay out in charity, or of his time and labour in direct endeavours to ſerve the publick.

In order to form a judgment in theſe caſes, there are ſo many particulars to be conſidered in our own circumſtances and abilities, and in the ſtate of mankind and the world, that we cannot but be in ſome uncertainty. There are indeed degrees of *defect* and *exceſs*, which we eaſily and certainly ſee to be wrong: But there is a great variety of intermediate degrees, concerning which we cannot abſolutely pronounce, that one of them rather than another ought to be choſen. —The ſame is true of the *general* duty of worſhipping God. Many of the *particular* circumſtances attending it, and the preciſe degree of frequency with which it ſhould be performed, are not diſtinctly marked out to us. In this, as well as the preceding inſtance, our conſciences, within certain limits, are *free* *, and for a very good reaſon; namely,

* The latitude here taken notice of is one thing that allows ſo much room and ſcope for unfairneſs and diſingenuity; and which renders it generally certain, that a backward unwilling heart that is not ſtrongly attached to virtue, and poſſeſſed with an inward reliſh for it, will err on the deficient ſide.

namely, becauſe we have no diſtinct apprehenſions of *rectitude* to guide us. To the ſame degree and extent that we ſee this, we are *bound*, in theſe as much as in any other caſes. Whenever any degree of beneficence, or any particular circumſtances and frequency of divine worſhip, or any behaviour in any poſſible inſtances, appear, *all things conſidered* BEST; they become *obligatory*. It is impoſſible to put a caſe, in which we ſhall not be *obliged* to conform ourſelves to the *right* of it, whatever that is. Even what, at any time, or in any circumſtances, is, upon the whole, only more *proper* to be done, *ought* then to be done; and to ſuppoſe the contrary, would be to take away the whole ſenſe and meaning of ſuch an aſſertion.

In ſhort, the following general reaſoning will hold univerſally.—Let a perſon be ſuppoſed to have under his conſideration, any action propoſed to be performed by him. The performance of it muſt be either right, or wrong, or indifferent. Now it is ſelf-evident, that, if it is not the laſt, it muſt be one of the other two, and that obligation will enſue: For what can be plainer than that it is a contradiction to ſay, we

may

may act as we will, when it is not *indifferent* how we act?—If it is *wrong*, obligation to forbear is implied.—If *right*, this may be true only of such *kind* of actions, as relieving the miserable, or worshipping the Deity in general; and then, it is only these *general duties* that are obligatory, which may be consistent with complete liberty and perfect indifference, in regard to the *particular action* in view.—Or, it may be true of this *particular* action, and then it is no longer indifferent; yet still, there may be liberty as to the time and manner of doing it. But if even the time and manner are not indifferent, then is he also as to these *obliged*.

"But what shall we say, to the *greater* "*amiableness* of the actions under considera-"tion? How can there be greater virtue, "or any virtue at all, in doing particular "actions which before-hand were indifferent, and which without any blame we "might have omitted?"—The answer is very easy. What denominates an agent virtuous, and entitles him to praise, is his acting from a regard to goodness and right. Now, the performance of particular instances of duty, or producing particular effects which have nothing in them that

requires

requires our preference, may, as much as any actions whatſoever, proceed from this regard. Relieving a miſerable object is virtue, though there may be no reaſon that obliges a perſon to ſelect this object in particular out of many others. Worſhipping God may ariſe from a general ſenſe of duty, though it is known that the particular times and manner in which it is done, have nothing morally better in them.—And as to the *greater* merit we apprehend in many actions of this kind (as, in many inſtances of generoſity, kindneſs, charity, and forgiveneſs of injuries) it is plainly to be accounted for, in the following manner.—As every action of an agent is *in him* ſo far virtuous, as he was determined to it by a regard to virtue; ſo the more of this regard it diſcovers, the more we muſt admire it. And it is plain, it is more diſcovered, and a ſtronger virtuous principle proved, by fixing (in caſes where the limits of duty are not exactly defined) upon the greater rather than the leſs. A perſon acts more apparently from good motives, and ſhews a greater degree of benevolence, and is therefore deſervedly more applauded, who chuſes to devote *more* of his fortune, his time and his labour, to promote

mote the happineſs of his fellow-creatures, or to ſerve his neighbours or his country, when he knows not but that if he had devoted *leſs*, he would have done all that was in reaſon incumbent upon *him*, and deſerved juſt commendation. And even when there is *over*doing, and a perſon is led to viſible extremes and an undue neglect of his private concerns, we always approve, except we ſuſpect the influence of ſome indirect motives. Some of theſe obſervations will be again more particularly inſiſted on, when I come to conſider the difference which they imply and require us to keep in view, between the virtue of the *action*, and the virtue of the *agent*.

I ſhall only ſay farther on this ſubject, that it appears to be ſo far from being true, that the performance of *mere* duty produces no love or friendſhip to the agent, (as has been aſſerted) that, on the contrary, he who, however tempted and oppoſed, diſcharges his whole duty, and endeavours faithfully and uniformly to *be* and *do* in all reſpects juſt what he *ought* to *be* and *do*, is the object of our higheſt love and friendſhip: To aim at acting *beyond* obligation, being the ſame with aiming at acting *contrary*

trary to obligation; and doing *more* than is fit to be done, the ſame with *doing wrong*.

Having now given, what appears to me, the true account of the nature and foundation of moral good and evil and of moral obligation, I will add, as a ſupplement to this chapter, an examination of ſome of the forms of expreſſion, which ſeveral eminent writers have uſed on this ſubject.

The meaning and deſign of theſe expreſſions will appear, after conſidering, that all actions being neceſſarily right, indifferent, or wrong; what determines which of theſe an action ſhould be accounted is the *truth of the caſe*; or the relations and circumſtances of the agent and the objects. In certain relations there is a certain conduct right. There are certain manners of behaviour which we unavoidably approve, as ſoon as theſe relations are known. Change the relations, and a different manner of behaviour becomes right. Nothing is clearer than that what is due or undue, proper or improper to be done, muſt vary according to the different natures and circumſtances of beings. If a particular treatment of *one* nature is right; it is impoſſible that the ſame treat-

treatment of a *different* nature, or of *all* natures, ſhould be right.

From hence aroſe the expreſſions, *acting ſuitably to the natures of things*; *treating things as they are*; *conformity to truth*; *agreement and diſagreement*, *congruity and incongruity between actions and relations.* Theſe expreſſions are of no uſe, and have little meaning, if conſidered as intended to *define* virtue; for they evidently *preſuppoſe* it. Treating an object as being what *it is*, is treating it as *it is right ſuch* an object ſhould be treated. Conforming ourſelves to truth means the ſame with conforming ourſelves to the true ſtate and relations we are in; which is the ſame with doing what ſuch a ſtate and ſuch relations *require*, or what is *right* in them. In given circumſtances, there is ſomething peculiar and determinate *beſt* to be done; which, when theſe circumſtances ceaſe, ceaſes with them, and other obligations ariſe. This naturally leads us to ſpeak of *ſuiting* actions to circumſtances, natures, and characters; and of the *agreement* and *repugnancy* between them. Nor, when thus conſidered, is there any thing in ſuch ways of ſpeaking, not proper and intelligible. But, at the ſame time, it is very

obvious,

obvious, that they are only different phraſes for *right* and *wrong*; and it is to be wiſhed that thoſe who have made uſe of them had attended more to this, and avoided the ambiguity and confuſion ariſing from ſeeming to deny an *immediate perception* of morality without any deductions of reaſoning; and from attempting to give definitions of words which admit not of them. Were any one to define *pleaſure*, to be the *agreement* between a faculty and its object; what inſtruction would ſuch a definition convey? Would it be amiſs to aſk, what this *agreement* is; and whether any thing be meant by it, different from the *pleaſure itſelf*, which the object is fitted to produce by its influence on the faculty?

It is well known that Mr. *Wollaſton*, in a work which has obtained great and juſt reputation, places the whole notion of moral good and evil in *ſignifying* and *denying* truth. Suppoſing his meaning to be, that all virtue and vice may be reduced to theſe *particular inſtances* of them; nothing can be more plain, than that it leaves the nature and origin of our ideas of them as much as ever undetermined: For it acquaints us not, whence our ideas of right in obſerving truth and

wrong

wrong in violating it, ariſe; but ſuppoſes theſe to be perceptions of ſelf-evident truths, as indeed they are, but not more ſo, than our ideas of the other principles of morality. —The evil of ingratitude and cruelty is not the ſame with that of denying truth, or affirming a lie: Nor can the *formal ratio and notion* of it (as Mr. *Wollaſton* ſpeaks) be juſtly ſaid to conſiſt in this; becauſe there may be no intention to deny any thing true, or to produce an aſſent to any thing falſe. Ingratitude and cruelty would be wrong, though there were no rational creatures in the world beſides the agent, and though he could have no deſign to declare a falſhood; which is a quite diſtinct ſpecies of evil.— A perſon, who neglects the worſhip due to God, may have no thought of denying his exiſtence, or of conveying any ſuch opinion to others. It is true, he acts as if he did not exiſt, that is, in a manner which nothing elſe can juſtify, or which, upon any other ſuppoſition, is inexcuſeable; and therefore, *figuratively ſpeaking*, may be ſaid to *contradict* truth, and to declare himſelf to be ſelf-originated and ſelf-ſufficient *.

It

* How plain is it here, that the very thing that gives ground for the application of this language in this inſtance,

It is probable, this eminent writer meant in reality but little more than this; and the language he has introduced, I would not, by any means, be thought abſolutely to condemn. All I aim at, is to guard againſt making a wrong application of it.

With the ſame view I muſt add, that when virtue is ſaid to conſiſt in *conformity to the relations of perſons and things*; this muſt not be conſidered as a *definition of virtue*, or as intended to aſſign a *reaſon juſtifying the practice of it*. Nothing can be gained by ſuch forms of expreſſion, when uſed with theſe intentions: And, if we will conſider why it is right to conform ourſelves to the relations in which perſons and objects ſtand to us; we ſhall find ourſelves obliged to terminate our views in a *ſimple perception*, and ſomething *ultimately approved* for which no juſtifying reaſon can be aſſigned.—Explaining virtue by ſaying, that it is the *conformity of our actions to reaſon*, is yet leſs proper; for

 this

ſtance, is our perceiving, antecedently to this application, that ſuch a manner of acting, in ſuch circumſtances, is *wrong?* The ſame is true in all other inſtances: Nor, independently of this perception, could we ever know when to ſay, that an action affirms or denies truth. How then does ſuch language explain and define right and wrong?

this conformity ſignifying only, that our actions are ſuch as our reaſon diſcerns to be right; it will be no more than ſaying, that virtue is doing right *.

It

* To the ſame purpoſe Dr. *Adams* has obſerved, "That when virtue is ſaid to conſiſt in a conformity to "truth; in acting agreeably to the truth of the caſe; "to the reaſon, truth, or fitneſs of things; there is, "if not impropriety, ſomething of obſcurity or inac- "curacy in the expreſſion; and that the only meaning "of ſuch expreſſions will, in all caſes, be found to be "this; acting according to what reaſon, in the pre- "ſent circumſtances of the agent, and the relations he "ſtands in to the objects before him, pronounces to "be right." See his Sermon before quoted, p. 55—58.——"Truth (as he elſewhere ſays) "is a term of "wider extent than right. The characters of wiſdom "or prudence, of ſkill in any art or profeſſion, *are*, as "well as virtue, founded in a regard to truth, and "imply the acting agreeably to the nature and reaſon "of things; yet are theſe ideas certainly diſtinct "from that of goodneſs, or moral rectitude. The "man, who builds according to the principles of geo- "metry, acts as agreeably to truth, and he who ſhould "tranſgreſs the rules of architecture, as much violates "truth, as he who acts agreeably to the duty of gra- "titude, or contrary to it. But, in the former of "theſe inſtances, the conformity to truth is not virtue "but ſkill; the deflection from it is not vice, but ig- "norance or folly," p. 29.—To theſe obſervations may be added, that to act *agreeably* to the character of an oppreſſor, or tyrant, is, in no improper ſenſe, to

act

It ſhould be further conſidered, that neither do theſe forms of expreſſion direct us to proper *criteria*, by which we may be enabled to judge in all caſes what is morally good or evil. For if, after weighing the ſtate and circumſtances of a caſe we do not perceive how it is proper to act; it would be trifling to direct us, for this end, to conſider what is *agreeable* to them. When, in given circumſtances, we cannot determine what is *right*, we muſt be alſo equally unable to determine what is *ſuitable* to thoſe circumſtances. It is indeed very proper and juſt to direct us, in order to judge of an action, to endeavour to diſcover the whole *truth* with reſpect to its probable or poſſible conſequences, the circumſtances and qualifications of the object, and the relations of the agent; for this, as was before ſaid, is what determines its moral nature; and no more can be intended by repreſenting *truth* and *relations* as *criteria* of virtue.

" The language we are conſidering then " expreſſing neither *definitions* nor *proper*

" *criteria*

act viciouſly; to injure and to deſtroy. So vague and looſe is this way of ſpeaking, and ſo liable to objections, when uſed to define and explain virtue.

" *criteria* of virtue, of what uſe is it? and " what is deſigned by it?"—I anſwer, that it is evidently deſigned to ſhew, that morality *is founded* in truth and reaſon; or that it is equally neceſſary and immutable, and perceived by the ſame power, with the natural proportions and eſſential differences of things.

" But what, it may be again aſked, is it " more than bare aſſertion? What proof " of this does it convey?" In reply to this, it might be obſerved, that the ſame queſtions may be put to thoſe who have maintained the contrary; and it is, I think, neceſſary they ſhould better examine this ſubject before they conſider it, as they do, a decided point, that our ideas of morality are derived from an arbitrary ſenſe, and not ideas of the underſtanding.

The agreement of *proportion* between certain quantities, is real and neceſſary; and perceived by the underſtanding. Why ſhould we doubt, whether the agreement of *fitneſs* alſo between certain actions and relations, is real and neceſſary, and perceived by the ſame faculty? From the different natures, properties, and poſitions of different objects reſult neceſſarily different *relative* fitneſſes and unfitneſſes;

unfitnesses; different productive *powers*; different *aptitudes* to different ends, and agreements or disagreements amongst themselves. What is there absurd or exceptionable in saying, likewise, that from the various relations of beings and objects, there result different *moral* fitnesses and unfitnesses of action; different *obligations* of conduct; which are equally real and unalterable with the former, and equally independent of our ideas and opinions? For any particular natural objects to exist at all, and for them to exist with such and such mutual proportions, is the same. And, in like manner, for reasonable beings of particular natures and capacities to exist at all in such and such circumstances and relations, and for such and such conduct to be fit or proper is the same. And as the Author of nature, in creating the former, willed the proportions and truths implied in them to exist; so likewise, by the very act of creating the latter, and placing them in their respective relations to one another and to himself, he willed that such and such actions should be done, and such and such duties observed.—When we compare innocence and eternal misery, the idea of *unsuitableness* between them arises in our minds. And

from comparing together many natural objects and beings, an idea of *unſuitableneſs*, likewiſe, but of a totally different kind, ariſes within us; that is, we perceive ſuch a *repugnancy* between them, that the one cannot be made to correſpond to the other; or, that their different properties cannot co-exiſt in the ſame ſubject; or, that they are not capable of producing ſuch and ſuch particular effects on one another. Why ſhould one of theſe be taken to be leſs *real* than the other?—No one can avoid owning that he has the idea of *unſuitableneſs*; (that is, a ſentiment of *wrong*) in the application of eternal miſery to innocence. Let him, if he can, find out a reaſon for denying it to be a ſentiment of his underſtanding, and a perception of truth.

To this purpoſe have the advocates for fitneſs, as the foundation of morality, argued. This, I think, has been the drift of their aſſertions and reaſonings. It muſt, however, be allowed, that they have, by too lax a uſe of words, given occaſion for the objections of thoſe who have embraced and defended the contrary opinion.

It would not be difficult to ſhew, how the like diſpute might be raiſed about the original

original of our ideas of *power* and *connexion*, the like objections ſtarted, and the ſame embarraſſment produced.

But it will better help to illuſtrate ſome of theſe remarks, and give a clearer view of the ſtate of this controverſy, if, for *moral good and evil*, we ſubſtitute *equality* and *inequality*, and ſuppoſe theſe to be the objects of enquiry. He that ſhould derive our ideas of them from a *ſenſe*, would be undoubtedly miſtaken, if he meant any thing more, than that they were *immediately* perceived. And another, who, in oppoſition to this, ſhould aſſert them to be *founded on the natures and unalterable mutual reſpects and proportions of things*; and to denote *conformity to reaſon*, or the *agreement and diſagreement*, *correſpondency and repugnancy* between different quantities; would as plainly aſſert the truth; though in language liable to be miſunderſtood, and really trifling, if deſigned to ſet aſide an *immediate power* of perception in this caſe, and to define *equality* and *inequality*: Nor, in this view of ſuch language, would any thing be more proper than to obſerve, how much more determinate it is to ſay, that the *agreement* between two quantities is their *equality*, than that their

equality is the *agreement* between them. But how unreaſonable would it be to conclude, as in the parallel caſe has been done, that therefore *equality* and *inequality* are perceived by an *implanted ſenſe*, and not at all objects of knowledge?

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Of the Subject-matter of Virtue, or its principal Heads and Diviſions.

THERE remain yet three queſtions to be conſidered in relation to virtue.

Firſt, To what particular courſe of action we give this name, or what are the chief *heads* of virtue.

Secondly, What is the *principle* or *motive*, from which a virtuous agent, as ſuch, acts.

Thirdly, What is meant by the different *degrees* of virtue, in different actions and characters, and how we eſtimate them.—Each of theſe queſtions ſhall be examined in the order in which they are here propoſed.

There would be leſs occaſion for the firſt of theſe enquiries, if ſeveral writers had not maintained, that the *whole* of virtue conſiſts in BENEVOLENCE. Nothing better can be

be offered on this point, than what is ſaid under the fifth obſervation in the *Diſſertation on the Nature of Virtue*, annexed to Biſhop *Butler*'s *Analogy*.—— From hence, therefore, I ſhall borrow the following paſſage:—" Benevolence and the want of it, " ſingly conſidered, are in no ſort the whole " of virtue and vice; for, if this were the caſe, " in the review of one's own character, or " that of others, our moral underſtanding " and moral ſenſe, would be indifferent to " every thing, but the degrees in which be- " nevolence prevailed, and the degrees in " which it was wanting: That is, we " ſhould neither approve of benevolence to " ſome perſons rather than to others, nor " diſapprove injuſtice and falſhood upon " any other account, than merely as an " over-balance of happineſs was foreſeen " likely to be produced by the firſt, and of " miſery by the laſt. But now, on the con- " trary, ſuppoſe two men competitors for " any thing whatever, which would be of " equal advantage to either of them. Though " nothing indeed would be more impertı- " nent, than for a ſtranger to buſy himſelf " to get one of them preferred to the other; " yet ſuch endeavour would be virtue in " behalf

" behalf of a friend, or benefactor, ab-
" ſtracted from all conſideration of diſtant
" conſequences; as, that examples of gra-
" titude, and the cultivation of friendſhip,
" would be of general good to the world.—
" Again, ſuppoſe one man ſhould by fraud
" or violence, take from another the fruit
" of his labour, with intent to give it to a
" third, who, he thought, would have as
" much pleaſure from it, as would balance
" the pleaſure which the firſt poſſeſſor would
" have had in the enjoyment, and his vex-
" ation in the loſs of it; ſuppoſe again,
" that no bad conſeq uences would follow,
" yet ſuch an action would ſurely be vi-
" cious."

The caſes here put are clear and deciſive, nor is it eaſy to conceive what can be ſaid in reply to them. Many other caſes and obſervations, to the ſame purpoſe, might be mentioned.—It cannot be true, for inſtance, that promiſes and engagements are not in any caſe binding upon any one, any further than he thinks the obſervance of them will be productive of good upon the whole to ſociety; or, that we are releaſed from all obligation to regard them, as ſoon as we believe, that violating them will not hurt the

the perſon to whom they have been made, or that, if detrimental to him, it will be equally beneficial to ourſelves, or, in any other way, will be attended with advantages equivalent to the foreſeen harm. He would be looked upon by all, as having acted baſely, who, having any advantage to beſtow which he had engaged to give to one perſon, ſhould give it another; nor would it be regarded as any vindication of his conduct to alledge, that he knew this other would reap equal profit from it. Many particular actions, and omiſſions of action, become, in conſequence of promiſes and engagements, highly evil, which otherwiſe would have been entirely innocent; and the degree of vice in any harm done, is always greatly increaſed, when done by means of deceit and treachery.—To treat a party of rebels, after they had ſurrendered themſelves upon certain terms ſtipulated with them, in the ſame manner as if they had been reduced by force, would be generally diſapproved: And yet it might be hard to ſhew, that the conſequences of not keeping faith with them would have been very detrimental to the publick. — A general would be univerſally condemned, who, by means

means of any treacherous contrivance ſhould engage his enemies to truſt themſelves in his power, and then deſtroy them. How different are our ideas of ſuch conduct from thoſe we have of the ſame end gained by open and fair conqueſt?

Would it be indifferent whether a perſon, ſuppoſed to be juſt returned from ſome unknown country or new world, gave a true or falſe account of what he had ſeen? Is there a man in the world who, in ſuch a caſe, would not think it better to tell truth than needleſsly and wantonly to deceive? Is it poſſible any one can think he may innocently (to ſave himſelf or another from ſome ſmall inconvenience, which he can full as well prevent by other means) tell any lies or make any falſe proteſtations, if he *knows* they will never be found out? If he may thus impoſe upon his fellow-creatures by declaring one falſhood, why may he not in like circumſtances declare any number of falſhoods, and with any poſſible circumſtances of ſolemnity? Why is he not at liberty to make any declarations, however deceitful, to practiſe any kinds of diſſimulation and commit perjuries, whenever he believes they are likely to hurt no one,

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and will be the means of introducing him to any degree of greater eaſe or uſefulneſs in life?—Can we, when we conſider theſe things, avoid pronouncing, that there is *intrinſick rectitude* in keeping faith and inſincerity, and *intrinſick evil* in the contrary; and that it is by no means true, that veracity and falſhood appear *in themſelves*, and *excluſive* of *their conſequences*, wholly indifferent to our moral judgment? Is it a notion capable of being ſeriouſly defended, or even endured by an ingenuous mind, that the goodneſs of the end always conſecrates the means; or that, *cæteris paribus*, it is as innocent and laudable to accompliſh our purpoſes by lies, prevarication and perjury, as by faithful and open dealing and honeſt labour? wherein, upon ſuch ſentiments, would conſiſt the wickedneſs of pious frauds; and why are they condemned and deteſted?

No worſe miſtake, indeed, can be well conceived than this; for, as the excellent author before-cited obſerves, "it is certain, that ſome "of the moſt ſhocking inſtances of injuſtice*, adultery,

* Is a man warranted to deſtroy himſelf, as ſoon as he believes his life is become uſeleſs or burthenſome to thoſe about him, and miſerable to himſelf? How ſhocking

" adultery, murder, perjury, and even per-
" ſecution, may, in many ſuppoſable caſes,
" not have the appearance of being likely
" to produce an overbalance of miſery in
" the preſent ſtate; perhaps, ſometimes,
" may have a contrary appearance."

A diſapprobation in the human mind of ingratitude, injuſtice, and deceit, none deny. The point under examination is, the *ground* of this diſapprobation; whether it ariſes ſolely from views of inconvenience to others and confuſion in ſociety occaſioned by them; or whether there be not alſo *immediate wrong* apprehended in them, independently of their effects. The inſtances and conſiderations here produced ſeem ſufficiently to determine this. It appears, that they are diſapproved when

ſhocking in many circumſtances would the moſt private aſſaſſination be of a perſon whoſe death all may wiſh for, and conſider as a benefit to himſelf and to the world? Who would not ſeverely reproach himſelf for reſerving to himſelf the property of another which had been loſt, and which he had accidentally found, however ſecretly he might do this, and whatever reaſon he might have for thinking that it would be of greater uſe to him than to the proprietor? There would be no end of mentioning caſes of this ſort, but I have choſen to inſtance particularly in veracity.

when productive of no harm, and even when in ſome degree beneficial.

" Shall it be ſtill urged that, in caſes of " this kind, our diſapprobation is owing to " the idea of a plan or ſyſtem of common " utility eſtabliſhed by cuſtom in the mind " with which theſe vices are apprehended " to be inconſiſtent; or to a habit acquired " of conſidering them as of general perni- " cious tendency, by which we are inſen- " ſibly influenced, whenever, in any par- " ticular circumſtances or inſtances, we " contemplate them?"—But why muſt we have recourſe to the influence of habits and aſſociations in this caſe? This has been the refuge of thoſe, who would reſolve all our moral perceptions into views of private advantage, and may ſerve to evade almoſt any evidence which can be derived from the experience we have of the workings of our minds and the motives of our actions. In the caſes which have been mentioned, we may remove entirely the idea of a publick, and ſuppoſe no perſons exiſting whoſe ſtate they can at all influence; or, we may ſuppoſe all memory of the action to be for ever loſt as ſoon as done, and the agent to foreſee this; and yet, the ſame ideas of the ingra-

ingratitude, injuſtice, or violation of truth will remain.—If the whole reaſon for regarding truth aroſe from its influence on ſociety, a primitive Chriſtian would not have been blame-worthy for renouncing his religion, blaſpheming Chriſt, and worſhipping the Pagan gods (all which is no more than denying truth) whenever he could purchaſe his life by theſe means, and at the ſame time avoid a diſcovery, and thus prevent the prejudice to Chriſtians and Pagans that might ariſe from his conduct?—*Peter*, would not have been innocent in denying his Maſter with oaths and imprecations, though he had known that he ſhould never be detected. A ſtranger, in a Pagan country, would not do right to comply with its ſuperſtitions, to worſhip and profeſs contrary to his ſentiments, and abjure his faith, in order to ſecure his quiet or life, provided he judged the deceit would not be known, that he could do no good by a different conduct, or that his hypocriſy had no tendency to eſtabliſh and perpetuate idolatry.

It is further to be obſerved on this argument, that in theſe caſes it does not appear that mankind in general much attended to

distant consequences. Children, particularly, cannot be supposed to consider consquences, or to have any fixed ideas of a public or a community; and yet, we observe in them the same aversion to falshood and relish for truth, as in the rest of mankind. There is indeed no less evidence, that, in the cases specified, we approve and disapprove *immediately*, than there is that we do so, when we consider benevolence or cruelty. It has been urged against those who derive all our desires and actions from self-love, that they find out views and reasonings for men, which never entered the minds of most of them; and which, in all probability, none attended to in the common course of their thoughts and pursuits.—The same may be urged against those, who derive all our sentiments of moral good and evil from our approbation of benevolence and disapprobation of the want of it; and both, in my opinon, have undertaken tasks almost equally impracticable. Any person, one would imagine, who will impartially examine his own mind, may feel, in his dislike of several vices, something different from the apprehension of their diminishing happiness or producing misery, and easily observe that it

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is not merely under these notions that he always censures and condemns. It is true, this apprehension, when it occurs, always heightens our disapprobation. Falshood, ingratitude, and injustice undermine the foundations of all social intercourse and happiness, and the consequences of them, were they to become universal, would be terrible.—For this reason, supposing morality founded on an arbitrary structure of our minds, there would be a necessity for distinct senses immediately condemning and forbidding them. Leaving them to the influence of a general disapprobation of all actions evidencing a neglect of publick good, or without any particular determination against them any farther than by every man they should be thought likely to produce more misery than happiness, would be attended with the worst effects. It would not, in all likelihood, by any means, be sufficient to secure tolerably the order of human society; especially, considering how many amongst mankind there are, who are incapable of enlarged reflexions, and whose thoughts are confined within the narrowest limits; and how little prone all men naturally are to be affected with or to regard remote events, as well as

how liable they are to take up the wrongeſt opinions of the tendencies of their actions, and the good or ill to the world which they may occaſion.

Perhaps, he who ſhould maintain, that we have no affection properly reſting in *ourſelves*, but that all our deſires and averſions ariſe from a proſpect of advantage or detriment to *others*, would not aſſert what would be much leſs defenſible than what thoſe aſſert who maintain the reverſe of this, and deny all *diſintereſted benevolence*.—In like manner, to aſſert that our approbation of *beneficence* is to be reſolved into our approbation of *veracity*, or that the whole of morality conſiſts in *ſignifying and denying truth*, would not be much more unreaſonable than the contrary aſſertion, that our approbation of *veracity* and of all that is denominated virtue, is reſolvable into the approbation of *beneficence*. But why muſt there be in the human mind approbation only of one ſort of actions? Why muſt all moral good be reduced to one particular ſpecies of it, and kind affections, with the actions flowing from them, be repreſented, as alone capable of appearing to our moral faculty *virtuous*? Why may we not as well have an immediate reliſh alſo for truth, for

candour,

candour, ſincerity, piety, gratitude, and many other modes and principles of conduct?—Admitting all our ideas of morality to be derived from implanted determinations; the latter of theſe determinations is equally poſſible with the other; and what has been above hinted ſhews that there is the greateſt occaſion for them to ſecure the general welfare, and that therefore it might antecedently be expected that a good Being would give them to us *.

How unreaſonable is that love of uniformity and ſimplicity which inclines men thus to ſeek them where it is ſo difficult to find them?

* Dr. *Hutcheſon*, however he may in general have expreſſed himſelf, as if he thought the only object of the *moral ſenſe* and the whole of virtue, was benevolence, yet appears to have been convinced of the neceſſity of allowing *a diſtinct ſenſe*, recommending to us faithfulneſs and veracity.—See *Philoſophiæ moralis inſtitutio compendiaria*, Cap. IX. lib ii. *Facultatis hujus, ſive orationis, comes eſt et moderator ſenſus quidam ſubtilior, ex veri etiam cognoſcendi appetitione naturali non parum confirmatus, quo vera omnia, ſimplicia, fidelia comprobamus; falſa, ficta, fallacia odimus.*—Lib. ii. Cap. X. *Senſu enim cujuſque* proxime *commendatur is ſermonis uſus, quem communis exigit utilitas.—Hoc vero ſtabile conſilium eo tantum utendi ſermone, qui cum animi ſententia congruit, quique alios non decipit, comprobant et animi ſenſus per ſe, et utilitatis communis ratio.*

them? It is this that, on other ſubjects, has often led men aſtray. What miſtakes and extravagances in natural philoſophy have been produced, by the deſire of diſcovering *one* principle which ſhall account for all effects? I deny not but that in the human mind, as well as in the material world, the moſt wonderful ſimplicity takes place; but we ought to learn to wait, till we can, by careful obſervation and enquiry, find out wherein it conſiſts; and not ſuffer ourſelves raſhly to determine any thing concerning it, or to receive any general cauſes and principles which cannot be proved by experience.

If the account of morality I have given is juſt, it is not to be conceived, that promoting the happineſs of others ſhould comprehend the whole of our duty, or that the conſideration of publick good ſhould be that alone in *all* circumſtances which can have any concern in determining what is right or wrong. It has been obſerved, that every different ſituation of a reaſonable creature requires a different manner of acting, and that concerning all that can be propoſed to be done, ſomething is to be affirmed or denied, which, when known, neceſſarily implies

plies a *direction* to the agent in regard to his behaviour.

Having premiſed theſe obſervations, I ſhall now proceed to enumerate ſome of the moſt important *Branches of virtue*, or *heads of rectitude and duty*.

What requires the firſt place is our DUTY TO GOD, or the whole of that regard, ſubjection and homage we owe him. Theſe ſeem unqueſtionably objects of moral approbation, independently of all conſiderations of utility. They are conſidered as indiſpenſably obligatory, and yet the principle upon which they are practiſed cannot be an intention, in any manner, to be uſeful or profitable to the object of them. Thoſe perſons muſt be uncommonly weak and ignorant who mean, by their religious ſervices, to make an addition to the happineſs of the Deity, or who entertain any apprehenſions, that it is on his own account, and to advance his own good, he expects their gratitude and prayers. I know, indeed, that ſome writers of great worth have expreſſed themſelves, as if they doubted, whether the ſecret ſpring of all

obedience to him, and concurrence with his ends, is not ſome deſire of contributing to his ſatisfaction and delight. It would be trifling with moſt of my readers, to employ much time, in repreſenting the prodigious abſurdity of ſuch an opinion.

Let any pious man of plain ſenſe and free from groſs ſuperſtition, be appealed to, and aſked, whether he approves of piety to God as proceeding from a view to his felicity? whether he ſubmits to his will, and worſhips and prays to him, from an opinion that theſe, in the literal ſenſe, *pleaſe* or gratify him? He would undoubtedly at once diſclaim any ſuch ſentiments and motives. Upon a little conſideration he might ſay, "he obeyed and worſhipped God, becauſe "it was *right*—becauſe he apprehended it "his *duty*."—Should he be aſked, why he thought obedience and devotion to God his *duty?* the reply that would moſt naturally occur to him, would be; "becauſe God "was the creator, governor, and benefac- "tor of the whole world, and particularly "was *his* creator, governor, and benefac- "tor." But ſhould he be once more aſked, why he thought it his duty to honour and worſhip his Maker, benefactor and gover-

nor?

nor? he would (as well he might) wonder at the queſtion, as much as if he had been aſked, why twenty was greater than two? —Why ſhould we not admit here the natural and unperverted ſentiments of men, and acknowledge, what leaves no difficulty and ſeems ſo evident, that ſubmiſſion, reverence, and devotion to *ſuch* a being as God, are, as much as any behaviour to our fellow-men, inſtances of *immediate duty intuitively* perceived; the ſenſe of which, equally with kind affections, is a ſpring and motive of action.

That the ſtate and happineſs of the Deity, cannot be affected by any thing we, or any other beings, can do, no one ſurely, upon mature conſideration, will deny. But let it be only *ſuppoſed*, that this is the caſe; what alterations will follow as to our duty to him? Would no behaviour on this ſuppoſition, terminating ſolely in him as its object and end, remain proper? Would it have any effect in releaſing the rational creation from their allegiance, and rendering impiety and diſobedience leſs ſhocking?

It is true, all the pious and virtuous are actuated by love to God, which implies joy in his happineſs; but this would never pro-

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duce any acts of acknowledgement and obedience, or any ſtudy of the good of others in compliance with his intentions; while there is no apprehenſion that they can affect his happineſs; and, at the ſame time, no perception of fitneſs in them independent of this.

What has been now ſaid, is, in ſome degree, applicable to ſuperiors and benefactors among created beings; and the grounds of duty to them, are, in their general nature, the ſame with thoſe of our duty to the Deity. A fellow-man may be raiſed ſo much above us in ſtation and character, and ſo little within the reach of any of the effects of what we can do, that the reaſon of the reſpect and ſubmiſſion we pay him, and of our general behaviour to him, cannot be any view to his benefit, but *principally*, or *ſolely*, the ſenſe of what is in itſelf right, decent, or becoming.—To all beings, according to their reſpective natures, characters, abilities, and relations to us, there are ſuitable affections and manners of behaviour owing, which, as long as their characters and relations to us continue the ſame, are as invariable as the proportion between any particular geometrical

trical figures or quantities.—The higher the rank of any being is, the more perfect his nature, the more excellent his character, the more near and intimate his connexions with us, and the greater our obligations to him; the more ſtrict and indiſpenſable duty, and the greater degree of regard, affection, and ſubmiſſion we owe him.

This laſt obſervation ſhews us, what ideas we ought to entertain of the importance of the duty we owe to God, and of the place it holds amongſt our other duties. There can, certainly, be no proportion between what is due from us to *creatures* and to the *Creator*; between the regard and deference we owe to beings of precarious, derived, and limited goodneſs, and to him who poſſeſſes original, neceſſary, everlaſting fulneſs of all that is amiable. As much as this Being ſurpaſſes other beings in perfection and excellence, ſo much is he the worthier object of our veneration and love. As much as we are more dependent upon him, and indebted to him, ſo much the more abſolute ſubjection and ardent gratitude may he claim from us. —The whole univerſe, compared with God, is nothing in *itſelf*, nothing to *us*. He ought then to be *all* to us; his will our unalterable

able guide; his goodneſs the object of our conſtant praiſe and truſt; the conſideration of his all-directing providence our higheſt joy; the ſecuring his favour our utmoſt ambition; and the imitation of his righteouſneſs the great end of all our actions. He is the fountain of all power and juriſdiction, the cauſe of all cauſes, the diſpoſer of the lots of all beings, the life and informing principle of all nature; from whoſe never-ceaſing influence every thing derives its capacity of giving us pleaſure; and in whom, as their ſource and centre, are united all the degrees of beauty and good that we can obſerve in the creation. On him then ought our ſtrongeſt affection and admiration to be fixed, and to him ought our minds to be continually directed. How ſhameful would it be to forget this Being amidſt ſhadows and vanities, to attend to his *works* more than *himſelf*, or to regard any thing equally with him?—It is here, undoubtedly, virtue ought to begin: From hence it ſhould take its riſe. A regard to God, as our firſt and ſovereign principle of conduct, ſhould always poſſeſs us, accompany us in the diſcharge of all private and ſocial duties, and govern our whole lives. Inferior authority

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we ought to ſubmit to; but at the ſame time ultimately viewing that authority, which is the ground of all other, and ſupreme in nature. Inferior benefactors we ſhould be grateful to, in proportion to our obligations to them and dependence upon them; but yet conſidering them as only inſtruments to his goodneſs, and reſerving our firſt and chief gratitude for our firſt and chief benefactor. The gifts of his bounty, the objects to which he has adapted our faculties, and the means of happineſs he has provided for us, we ſhould accept and enjoy; but it would be diſingenuous and baſe to do it with little conſideration of the giver, or with hearts void of emotion towards him. Every degree of real worth we obſerve among inferior beings ſhould be properly acknowledged, and eſteemed; but yet as being no more than rays from his glory, and faint reſemblances of his perfections. Created excellence and beauty we may and muſt admire; but it would be inexcuſable to be ſo much taken up with theſe, as to overlook him before whom all other excellence vaniſhes. To him through all inferior cauſes we ought to look; and his hand, it becomes us to own and adore, in all the phænomena

of

of nature, and in every event. The conſideration of his preſence with us ſhould affect us more, and be a ſtronger check upon our behaviour, than if we knew we were every moment expoſed to the view of the whole creation. We ought to love him above all things, to throw open our minds, as much as poſſible, to his influence, and keep up a conſtant intercourſe with him by prayer and devotion. We ought to refer ourſelves abſolutely to his management, rely implicitly on his care, commit, with boundleſs hope, our whole beings to him *in well-doing*, and *wiſh* for nothing, at any time, but what is moſt acceptable to his wiſdom and goodneſs.—In ſhort; he ought to have, in all reſpects, the ſupremacy in our minds; every action and deſign ſhould be ſacred to him; reverence, admiration, hope, joy, deſire of approbation, and all the affections ſuited to ſuch an object, ſhould exert themſelves within us in the higheſt degree we are capable of them. An union to him, by a reſemblance and participation of his perfections, we ſhould aſpire to, as our complete dignity and happineſs, beyond which there can be nothing worthy the concern of any being. No rebellious inclination

tion ſhould be once indulged; no murmur, in any events, ſhew itſelf in our minds; and no deſire or thought ever entertained by us, which is inconſiſtent with an inviolable and chearful loyalty of heart to his government.

Theſe are ſome of the chief particulars of our duty to the Deity; and it naturally here offers itſelf to our obſervation, how extremely defective the characters of thoſe perſons are, who, whatever they may be in other reſpects, live in the neglect of God. Nothing, indeed, can be more melancholy, than to ſee ſo many perſons capable of maintaining a good opinion of themſelves, though they know themſelves to be regardleſs of piety, and inattentive to the Author of all good. Can any one ſeriouſly think, that a miſbehaviour of this kind is not as truly inconſiſtent with goodneſs of temper and ſound virtue, and in the ſame manner deſtructive of the foundations of hope and bliſs, as any other miſbehaviour? Do neglect and ingratitude, when men are the objects of them, argue *great* evil of temper, but *none* when the author of the world is their object? Why ſhould *impiety* be leſs criminal than *diſhoneſty*?

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Every man, as far as he discharges private and social duties, is to be loved and valued, nor can any thing be said that ought in reason to discourage him. Whatever good any person does, or whatever degree of real virtue he possesses, he is sure, in some way or other, to be the better for. Tho' it should not be such as will save him from just condemnation; yet it will at least, render him so much the less guilty and unhappy.—But, in truth, as long as men continue void of religion and piety, there is great reason to apprehend they are destitute of the genuine principle of virtue, and possess but little true moral worth. Their good behaviour in other instances, may probably flow more from the influence of instinct and natural temper, or from the love of distinction, credit, and private advantages, than from a sincere regard to what is *reasonable* and *fit as such*. Were this the principle that chiefly influenced them, they would have an equal regard to *all* duty; they could not be easy in the omission of any thing they know to be right, and especially not in the habitual neglect of him, with whom they have infinitely more to do, than with all the world.

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—He that forgets God and his government, preſence, and laws, wants the main ſupport and the living root of genuine virtue, as well as the moſt fruitful ſource of tranquillity and joy: Nor can he, with due exactneſs, care, and faithfulneſs, be ſuppoſed capable of performing his duties to himſelf and others. He that is without the proper affections to the Author of his being, or who does not ſtudy to cultivate them by thoſe acts and exerciſes, which are the natural expreſſions of them, ſhould indeed be aſhamed to make any pretenſions to integrity and goodneſs of character.—"The knowledge and "love of the Deity, the univerſal mind, is "as natural a perfection to ſuch a being as "man, as any accompliſhment to which "we arrive by cultivating our natural diſ-"poſitions; nor is that mind come to the "proper ſtate and vigour of its kind, where "religion is not the main exerciſe and de-"light *."

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* *Illuſtrations on the Moral Senſe* by Dr. *Hutcheſon*, Sect. 6. See alſo his *Syſtem of Moral Philoſophy*, Chap X. Book I. Vol. I. where may be found an excellent account of the worſhip and affections due to God, and of their importance to our perfection and happineſs.—

See

It must, however, be added, that the persons who fall into the contrary extreme, are, upon all accounts, the most inexcusable and wicked; I mean, those who pretend to *religion* without *benevolence*, without honesty; who are zealously devout, but at the same time envious, peevish, perverse, spiteful, and can cheat and trick, lie and caluminate. Nothing can be conceived more

See likewise the *Characteristicks*, Vol. II. p. 76. "Hence "we may determine justly the relation which virtue "has to piety; the first being not complete but in the "latter: Since where the latter is wanting, there can-"not be the same benignity, firmness, or constancy; "the same good composure of the affections, or the same "uniformity of mind. And thus the perfection and "height of virtue must be owing to the belief of a "God."—And elsewhere, "Man is not only born to "virtue, friendship, honesty, and faith, but to reli-"gion, piety, adoration, and a generous surrender of "his mind to whatever happens from that supreme "cause, or order of things, which he acknowldges en-"tirely just and perfect." Vol. III. p. 224.—"My "design is this, to make you free and happy, always "looking unto God in every small and in every great "matter." Εις τον θεον αφορωντας εν παση μικρω και μεγαλω. *Epict.* apud *Arr.* Lib. ii. cap. 19.—"Nothing, says "*M. Antoninus*, is well done, that is done without a "respect to the Divine nature." Ουκ ανθρωπινον τι ανευ της επι τα θεια συναναφορας ευ πραξεις. Lib. iii. Sect. 13.

more inconſiſtent, or ſhameful than this. The ſolemn worſhip of ſuch is the higheſt poſſible aggravation of their guilt. The regard they pretend for God is an abuſe and mockery of him; and their religion the worſt ſort of *blaſphemy*. Religion furniſhes us with the ſtrongeſt motives to ſocial duties; it lays us under additional obligations to perform them; and it is the nature of it to improve our zeal for all that is juſt and good, to increaſe our love of all men, and to render us more gentle, mild, fair, candid, and upright, in proportion to the degree in which it truly poſſeſſes our hearts. He, therefore, who, while under any influence from religion, and with the idea of God in his mind, does any thing wrong, is ſo much the more blameable, and ſhews proportionably greater degeneracy and viciouſneſs of character.

Before we quit this ſubject, I cannot help begging the reader to pauſe a-while, and to conſider particularly, what is meant by the will of God, and how important and awful a motive to action it implies.

What can have a tendency to impreſs an attentive mind ſo deeply, or ſtrike it with ſo much force, as to think, in any circum-

ſtances, " God *wills* me to *do*, or to *bear* " this?"—One ſuch reflexion ſhould be enough at all times to diſarm the ſtrongeſt temptations, to ſilence every complaint, to defeat all oppoſition, and to inſpire us with the moſt inflexible courage and reſolution. Did we take more leiſure to attend to this, we could not poſſibly behave as we often do. He that, when ſolicited to any thing unlawful, will but ſtop, till he has duly attended to the *ſenſe* and felt the *weight* of this truth; " the Deity diſapproves and forbids " my compliance," muſt tremble at the thought of complying, and loſe all inclination to it. When we think rightly who God is, nothing can appear ſo ſhocking as that helpleſs, indigent beings, his own offſpring, and the objects of his conſtant care and bounty, ſhould counteract his intentions, and rebel againſt his authority, or be diſſatisfied with what he appoints. The moſt loud applauſes and general friendſhip of our fellow-creatures are nothing, and can have no effect, when ſeparated from his. All oppoſition is impotence, when not approved by him: And the threats of all the world, could they be ſuppoſed to interfere with what we know he requires from us, would,

would, if we had a juſt ſenſe of things, be as much loſt to us as a whiſper in the midſt of thunder, or the attention to a toy in the moment of inſtant death.

What it is he wills, we can in general be at no loſs to know. Whatever afflictions or diſappointments happen to us; whatever pains we feel, or unavoidable inconveniencies are mingled with the lot aſſigned us; theſe it is as certain that he wills us to bear, and to acquieſce in, as it is that we at all ſuffer by them: Since it is demonſtrable, that in his world and under his eye, nothing can befal us either *contrary* to, or *without* his conſent and direction. Whatever opportunities fall in our way of doing good, it is his will that we embrace and improve. Whatever our conſciences dictate to us, and we know to be *right* to be done, *that* he commands more evidently and undeniably, than if by a voice from heaven we had been called upon to do it.—And, when conſcious of faithful endeavours to be and do every thing that we ought to be and do, with what joy of heart may we look up to him, and exult in the aſſurance of his approbation? When employed in acts of kindneſs, in forming good habits, and practiſing truth

and righteouſneſs; how reſolute and immoveable muſt it render an upright perſon, and with what fortitude and ardour may it poſſeſs his breaſt, to conſider; "I am doing "the will of Him to whom the world owes "its birth, and whom the whole creation "obeys: I am imitating the perfections, "and ſecuring the friendſhip of that Being, "who *is* everlaſting truth and righteouſ-"neſs; who cannot, therefore, be conceiv-"ed to be indifferent to thoſe who practiſe "them; and who poſſeſſes infinite power, "and can cauſe all nature to furniſh out "its ſtores to bleſs me?"

Thus does religion elevate the mind; and ſuch is the force and majeſty it gives to virtue. The moſt effectual means of forming a good temper and eſtabliſhing good diſpoſitions, is the contemplation of the divine adminiſtration and goodneſs. We cannot have our minds too intent upon them, or ſtudy enough to make every thought pay homage to the Divinity, and to hallow our whole converſation by an habitual regard to him whoſe prerogative it is, as the firſt cauſe and the original of all perfection, to be the guide and end of all the actions of his creatures.

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It will, I ſuppoſe, ſcarcely be thought by the moſt curſory reader, that what has been now ſaid, lays greater ſtreſs upon *will*, than is conſiſtent with the foundation of morals I have been defending.

It has not been aſſerted, that, *of itſelf*, it can have any effect on morality, or be an end and rule of action. If we conſider it as denoting either the general *power* of producing effects, or the *actual* exertion of this power; it is moſt manifeſt, that it implies nothing of a *rule*, *direction*, or *motive*, but is entirely miniſterial to theſe, and ſuppoſes them. UNDERSTANDING is, in the nature of it, before WILL; KNOWLEDGE before POWER: it being neceſſary, that every intelligent agent, in exerting his power, ſhould *know* what he does, or deſign ſome effect, which he *underſtands* to be poſſible. The general idea of *will* is applicable alike to all beings capable of deſign and action; and, therefore, merely as will, it can never have any influence on our determinations.

What renders obedience to the will of God a duty of ſo high and indiſpenſable a nature, is this very conſideration, that it is the *will of God*: the will of the univerſal and almighty Parent, benefactor, and ruler;

a will which is in neceſſary union with perfect rectitude, which always executes the dictates of it, and which, whenever made known, directs to what is abſolutely *beſt*. When we obey this then, it is *unerring rectitude*, it is the *voice of eternal wiſdom* we obey; and it is then, therefore, we act moſt wiſely.

The *ſecond* branch of virtue, which we may take notice of, is that which has *ourſelves* for its object. There is, undoubtedly, a certain manner of conduct terminating in ourſelves, which is properly matter of *duty* to us. It is too abſurd to be maintained by any one, that no relation which an action may have to our own happineſs or miſery, can (ſuppoſing other beings unconcerned) have any influence in determining, whether it is or is not to be done, or make it appear to rational and calm reflexion otherwiſe than *morally indifferent*.—It is contradictory to ſuppoſe, that the ſame neceſſity which makes an end to us, and determines us to the choice and deſire * of it, ſhould be unaccompanied with an approbation of uſing

* See laſt Section of Chapter I. page 65, 66.

uſing the means of attaining it. It is, in reality, no more morally indifferent, how we employ our faculties, and what we do relating to our own intereſt, than it is how we behave to our fellow-creatures. If it is my duty to promote the good of *another*, and to abſtain from hurting him; the ſame, moſt certainly, muſt be my duty with regard to *myſelf*. It would be contrary to all reaſon to deny this; or to aſſert that I *ought* to conſult the good of another, but not my own; or that the advantage an action will produce to another makes it right to be done, but that an equal advantage to myſelf leaves me at liberty to do or omit it.—So far is this from being true, that it will be ſtrange, if any one can avoid acknowledging that it is right and fit that a being ſhould, when all circumſtances on both ſides are equal, *prefer* himſelf to another; reſerve, for example, to *himſelf*, a certain means of enjoyment he poſſeſſes rather than part with it to a *ſtranger*, to whom it will not be *more* beneficial.

It is evident, that this affords us another inſtance of right behaviour, the principle of which is not kind affection, and which no views of public utility, or ſympathy with

with others can poſſibly explain. What can prove more inconteſtably that actions evidencing kind affections are not the only ones we approve, than our approving in many caſes of the prevalency of ſelf-love againſt them, and our being conſcious that in theſe caſes it *ſhould* thus prevail? Private intereſt affords us, indeed, the fulleſt ſcope for virtue; and the practice of this branch of duty is no leſs difficult, and requires no leſs reſolution and zeal, than the practice of any other branch of duty. Our lower principles and appetites are by no means always friendly to true ſelf-love. They almoſt as often interfere with this as with benevolence. We continually ſee men, through the influence of them, acting in oppoſition to their own acknowledged intereſt, as well as to that of others, and ſacrificing to them their fortunes, healths, and lives.—Now, in caſes of this kind, when a perſon is tempted to forego his own happineſs by an importunate appetite, it is as really praiſeworthy to overcome the temptation, and preſerve a ſteady regard to his own intereſt, as it is to perform any acts of juſtice, or to overcome temptations to be diſhoneſt or cruel. Reſtraining licentious paſſions; ſtrict

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temperance, ſobriety, and chaſtity; rejecting *preſent* for *future greater* good; governing all our inferior powers ſo as that they ſhall never diſturb the order of our minds; acting up to the dignity and hopes of reaſonable and immortal beings; and the uniform and ſtedfaſt purſuit of our own true perfection in oppoſition to whatever difficulties may come in our way: This is high and true virtue. We have it not in our power to avoid approving and admiring ſuch conduct.—On the contrary; an undue neglect of our own good; folly and imprudence; intemperance and voluptuouſneſs; ſenſuality and extravagance; acting beneath our characters and expectations; confining our ambition to low and tranſitory objects, when we might fix them on objects of ineſtimable worth and eternal duration; following blind paſſions to beggary and diſtreſs, and yielding to them our liberty, independence, and ſelf-enjoyment, the principal bleſſings of this life, and the proſpect of future happineſs: All this, however hurtful to none but the agent himſelf, is vicious and criminal: The guilty perſon deſerves the ſevereſt reproaches, and neceſſarily appears to himſelf and others baſe

baſe and deſpicable.—The *ſelfiſhneſs* we blame is ſuch a regard to our own gratification, and ſuch an attention to a narrow and partial private intereſt, as engroſſes too much of our labour, contracts our hearts, excludes a due concern for others and a proper regard to their good, and ſtifles or checks the exerciſe of benevolence, friendſhip and generoſity. Where nothing of this ſort takes place, the care of *ſelf* is never cenſured, but always expected and praiſed.

It ſhould not, however, be overlooked, that acting with a view to private advantage does not ſo generally and certainly prove a virtuous intention, as acting with a view to publick good; and that, in rejecting an evil, or embracing a good to ourſelves, when it is ſenſible and at hand, and no oppoſition ariſes from any interfering deſires and propenſions, the virtuous effort and deſign, and conſequently the degree of virtue in the agent, can be but ſmall. But of this more will be ſaid hereafter.

For the reaſon, why we have not ſo ſenſible an indignation againſt the neglect of private good, as againſt many other inſtances of wrong behaviour, ſee what is ſaid under the fourth obſervation in *The Diſſertation*

tation on Virtue, at the end of *Butler*'s *Analogy*.

Thirdly, Another part of rectitude is BENEFICENCE, or the ſtudy of the good of others. Publick happineſs is an object that muſt neceſſarily determine all minds to prefer and deſire it. It is of eſſential and unchangeable value and importance; and there is not any thing which appears to our thoughts with greater light and evidence, or of which we have more undeniably an intuitive perception, than that it is *right* to promote and purſue it.—So important a part of virtue is this, and ſo univerſally acknowledged, that it is become a conſiderable ſubject of debate, whether it be not the *whole* of virtue.

As, under the preceding head, it has been obſerved, that it would be ſtrange that the good of another ſhould make an action fit to be performed, but our own good not; the contrary obſervation may be here made; namely, that it cannot be conſiſtently ſuppoſed that our own good ſhould make an action fit to be performed, but that of others not.

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All rational beings ought to have a ſhare in our kind wiſhes and affections: But we are ſurrounded with *fellow-men*, beings of the ſame nature, in the ſame circumſtances, and having the ſame wants with ourſelves; to whom therefore we are in a peculiar manner linked and related, and whoſe happineſs and miſery depend very much on our behaviour to them. Theſe conſiderations ought to engage us to labour to be uſeful to mankind, and to cultivate to the utmoſt the principle of benevolence to them. And how amiable does the man appear in whoſe breaſt this divine principle reigns; who ſtudies to make all with whom he has any connexion eaſy and happy; who loves others as he deſires others to love him; whoſe joy is their joy, and miſery their miſery; who is humane, patient, humble, and generous; never gives the leaſt indulgence to any harſh or unfriendly diſpoſitions, and comprehends in what he counts *himſelf* his relations, friends, neighbours, country, and ſpecies?

Fourthly, The next head of virtue proper to be mentioned is GRATITUDE. The conſideration that we have received benefits, lays us under *peculiar* obligations to the perſons who

who have conferred them; and renders that behaviour, which to others may be innocent, to them criminal. That this is not to be looked upon as the effect merely of the utility of gratitude, appears, I think, ſufficiently from the citation at the beginning of this chapter.

With reſpect to this part of virtue, it is proper to obſerve, that it is but one out of a great variety of inſtances, wherein particular facts and circumſtances conſtitute a fitneſs of a different behaviour to different perſons, independently of its conſequences. The different moral qualifications of different perſons; their different degrees of nearneſs to us in various reſpects; and numberleſs circumſtances in their ſituations, and characters, have the like effect, and give juſt reaſon, in innumerable inſtances, for a preference of ſome of them to others. Some of theſe circumſtances may be of ſo little moment in themſelves, that almoſt any appearance or poſſibility of greater good may ſuſpend their influence; although when there is no ſuch appearance, they have a full effect in determining what is *right*. A fact of the ſame kind with this, I ſhall have

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occaſion to mention under the head of *juſtice*.

What will be moſt beneficial, or productive of the greateſt publick good, I acknowledge to be the moſt general and leading conſideration in all our enquiries concerning *right*; and ſo important is it, when the publick intereſt depending is very conſiderable, that it may ſet aſide every obligation which would otherwiſe ariſe from the common rules of juſtice, from promiſes, private intereſt, friendſhip, gratitude, and all particular attachments and connexions.

Fifthly, VERACITY is a moſt important part of virtue. Of this a good deal has been already ſaid. As it has ſome dependence upon *different ſentiments* and *affections* with reſpect to *truth* and *falſhood*, it will not be improper to be a little particular in giving an account of the foundation of theſe.

The difference between truth and falſhood is the ſame with the difference between ſomething and nothing, and infinitely greater, than the difference between realities and chimeras or fictions; becauſe the latter have a real exiſtence *in the mind*, and ſo far, alſo

alſo a *poſſible*, *external* exiſtence.—There is indeed an imaginary reality, with which we are obliged always to cloath falſhood, in order at all to write or ſpeak about it; but this is derived entirely from the reality of its contrary. We commonly ſpeak of *diſorder*, *ſilence* and *darkneſs*, as if they denoted ſomewhat poſitive; whereas, whatever poſitive ideas we can have when we mention them, muſt be ideas of the things themſelves, of which they are negations.—Now, it cannot be conceived, that what is *real*, and what is not ſo, ſhould be alike regarded by the mind. Truth muſt be pleaſing and deſireable to an intelligent nature; nor can it be otherwiſe than diſagreeable to it, to find itſelf in a ſtate of deception, and mocked with error.—As much error as there is in any mind, ſo much darkneſs is there in it; ſo much, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, is it leſs diſtant from non-exiſtence. As much truth as it is in poſſeſſion of, ſo much has it of perception and knowledge. To diſaffect truth or to love error, is to deſire to ſee nothing as it is. We often indeed are pleaſed with finding that we have been miſtaken; but it is never

the having been miſtaken that pleaſes, but ſome advantage it was the occaſion of to us. In the ſame ſenſe, an act of villainy may pleaſe us; that is, ſome of its conſequences or circumſtances may pleaſe us, not the villainy itſelf. We frequently delight in our errors, but not *as* errors. As ſoon as we diſcover in any inſtance that we err, ſo far in that inſtance we no longer err; and this diſcovery is always in itſelf grateful to us, for the ſame reaſon that truth is ſo.—In ſhort, we ſhall, I believe, find, in whatever light we conſider this ſubject, that the notion of the arbitrarineſs of the reliſh we have for truth, or of the diſtinction we make in our inward regards between it and falſhood, implies what is impoſſible.

Truth then, neceſſarily recommends itſelf to our preference. And the eſſence of *lying* conſiſting in uſing eſtabliſhed ſigns in order to *deceive*, it muſt be diſapproved by all rational beings upon the ſame grounds with thoſe on which truth and knowledge are deſired by them, and right judgment preferred to miſtake and ignorance.—No beings, ſuppoſed alike indifferent to truth and falſhood and careleſs which they embrace, can be conceived to take

take offence at any impoſition upon themſelves or others; and he who will not ſay, that, conſequences apart, (which is all along ſuppoſed) to *know* is not better than to *err*, or that there is nothing to determine any being *as rational*, to chuſe wiſdom rather than folly, juſt apprehenſions rather than wrong, to be awake and actually to ſee rather than to be in a continual delirium: He, I ſay, who will not maintain this, will ſcarcely be unwilling to acknowledge an *immediate rectitude* in *veracity*.

Under this head, I would comprehend impartiality and honeſty of mind in our enquiries after truth, as well as a ſacred regard to it in all we ſay; fair and ingenuous dealing; ſuch an openneſs and ſimplicity of temper as exclude guile and prevarication, and all the contemptible arts of craft, equivocation and hypocriſy; fidelity to our engagements; ſincerity and uprightneſs in our tranſactions with ourſelves as well as others; and the careful avoiding of all ſecret attempts to deceive ourſelves, and to evade or diſguiſe the truth in examining our own characters.

Some of theſe particulars, though they belong to the diviſion of rectitude I have

now in view, and which has truth for its object; yet are not properly included in the ſignification of *veracity*.—But it requires our notice, that fidelity to promiſes is *properly* a branch or inſtance of *veracity*. —* The nature and obligation of *promiſes* have been ſaid to be attended with great difficulties; which makes it neceſſary to deſire this obſervation may be particularly conſidered.

By a *promiſe* ſome declaration is made, or aſſurance given to another, which brings us under an obligation to act or not to act, from which we ſhould have been otherwiſe free. Such an obligation never flows merely from declaring a *reſolution* or *intention*; and therefore a promiſe muſt mean more than this; and the whole difference is, that the one relates to the *preſent*, the other to *future* time.—When I ſay I *intend* to do an action, I affirm only a preſent fact.——But to *promiſe*, is to declare that ſuch a thing *ſhall* be done, or that ſuch and ſuch events *ſhall* happen. In this caſe, it is not enough to acquit

* See Treatiſe of Human Nature. Vol. III. Book III. part II. Sect. V.

acquit me from the charge of falſhood, that I *intend* to do what I promiſe, but it muſt be actually done, agreeably to the aſſurances given. After declaring a *reſolution* to do an action, a man is under no obligation actually to do it, becauſe he did not ſay he would; his word and veracity are not engaged; and the non-performance cannot infer the guilt of violating truth. On the contrary, when a perſon declares he *will* do any action, he becomes obliged to do it, and cannot afterwards omit it, without incurring the imputation of declaring falſhood, as really as if he had declared what he knew to be a falſe paſt or preſent fact; and in much the ſame manner as he would have done, if he had pretended to know, and had accordingly aſſerted, that a certain event would happen at a certain time which yet did not then happen. There is, however, a conſiderable difference between this laſt caſe, and the falſhood implied in breaking promiſes and engagements; for the object of theſe is ſomething, the exiſtence of which depends on ourſelves, and which we have in our power to bring to paſs; and therefore here the falſhood muſt be known and

wilful, and entirely imputable to our own neglect and guilt. But in the case of events predicted which are not subject to our dominion, the blame, as far as there may be any, must arise from pretending to knowledge which we really want, and asserting absolutely what we are not sure of.

To *promise* then, being to assert a fact dependent on ourselves, with an intention to produce faith in it and reliance upon it, as certainly to happen; the obligation to keep a promise is the same with the obligation to regard truth; and the intention of it cannot be, in the sense some have asserted, to will or create a new obligation; unless it can be pretended that the obligation to veracity is *created* by the mere breath of men every time they speak, or make any professions. If indeed we mean by creating a new obligation, that the producing a particular effect or performance of an external action becomes fit, in consequence of some new situation of a person (or some preceding acts of his own) which was not fit before; it may be very well acknowledged; nor is there any thing in the least mysterious in it. Thus, performance becomes our duty after a pro-

a promiſe, in the ſame ſenſe that repentance becomes our duty in conſequence of doing wrong, reparation of an injury, in conſequence of committing it, or a particular manner of conduct, in conſequence of placing ourſelves in particular circumſtances and relations of life.

As a confirmation of this account, if any confirmation was neceſſary, it might be obſerved, that falſe declarations in general, and violations of engagements admit of the ſame extenuations or aggravations according to the different degrees of ſolemnity with which they are made, and the different importance of the ſubjects of them.

The laſt part of virtue, I ſhall mention, is JUSTICE: Meaning by this word, that part of virtue which regards *property* and *commerce*.

The origin of the idea of *property* is the ſame with that of right and wrong in general. It denotes ſuch a relation of a particular object to a particular perſon, as infers or implies, that it is fit he ſhould have the diſpoſal of it rather than others, and wrong

to deprive him of it. This is what every one means by calling a thing his *right*, or saying that it is *his own*.

Upon this there are two questions that may be asked. *First*, How an object obtains this relation to a person?—*Secondly*, Into what we are to resolve, and how we are to account for, the right and wrong we perceive in these instances?

The writers of *Ethicks* are very well agreed in their answers to the first of these questions. An object, it is obvious, will acquire the relation to a person which has been mentioned, in consequence of first possession; in consequence of its being the fruit of his labour; by donation, succession, and many other ways not necessary to be here enumerated.

It is far from being so generally agreed, what account ought to be given of this: But I cannot find any particular difficulties attending it. Numberless are the facts and circumstances, which vary and modify the general law of right, and alter the relations of particular effects to it. Taking possession of an object, and disposing of it as I please, abstracted from all particular circumstances attending such conduct, is innocent; but

suppose

ſuppoſe the object was before poſſeſſed by another, the fruit of whoſe labour it was, and who conſents not to be deprived of it, and then this conduct becomes wrong; not merely upon the account of its conſequences, but *immediately* wrong.—Taking to ourſelves any of the means of enjoyment, when quite looſe from our fellow-creatures, or not related to them in any of the ways which determine property, cannot be the ſame with doing this, when the contrary is true; nor is it poſſible to frame the ſame moral judgment concerning an action in theſe different circumſtances.—That *firſt poſſeſſion*, *preſcription*, *donation*, *ſucceſſion*, &c. ſhould be circumſtances which alter the *nature of a caſe*, determine right and wrong, and induce obligation, where otherwiſe we ſhould have been free, is not leſs conceivable than that benefits received, private or publick intereſt, the will of certain beings, or any of the other conſiderations before inſiſted on, ſhould have this effect. There is no other account to be given of this, than that "ſuch "is truth, ſuch the nature of things." And this account, wherever it diſtinctly appears, is ultimate and ſatisfactory, and leaves nothing further for the mind to deſire.

The

The limbs, the faculties, and lives of perſons are *theirs*, or to be reckoned amongſt their *properties*, in much the ſame ſenſe and upon the ſame grounds with their external goods and acquiſitions. The former differ from the latter, no more than the latter differ among themſelves. The right to them is obtained in different ways, but is equally real and certain. And if, antecedently to ſociety and conventions entered into for common convenience, there is no property of the latter kind, and it is naturally indifferent in what manner what we take and detain is related to another; it will be hard to ſhew that the ſame is not true of the other kind of property, or that in reality there can be any right to any thing.

Were nothing meant, when we ſpeak of the *rights* of beings, but that it is for the general utility, that they ſhould have the excluſive enjoyment of ſuch and ſuch things; then, where this is not concerned, a man has no more right to his liberty or his life, than to objects the moſt foreign to him; and having no property, can be no object of injurious or unjuſt treatment. Suppoſing two men to live together, without being at all connected with or known to the reſt of the

the world; one of them could poſſeſs nothing that did not in reaſon lie quite open to the ſeizure of the other, nothing that was *his*, or that he could properly *give* away: There would be nothing wrong in the moſt wanton and unprovoked invaſion or deſtruction of the enjoyments of the one by the other, ſuppoſing this in the other's power, and that in any circumſtances he knew he ſhould gain as much by it as the other would loſe. What little reaſon then have we, upon theſe principles, for rejecting the opinion that a ſtate of nature is a ſtate of war?

Theſe obſervations may be more clearly applied to independent ſocieties of men, who are to be looked upon as in a ſtate of nature with reſpect to one another, and amongſt whom it is very ſtrange (as whatever one of them can take from the other may be equally uſeful to both) that the notions of *property* and *injuſtice* ſhould prevail almoſt as much as amongſt private perſons, if theſe notions are not natural, or if derived wholly from the conſideration of publick good. But beſides, if publick good be the ſole meaſure and foundation of *property* and of the *rights* of beings, it would be abſurd to ſay *innocent* beings have a right to exemption from

from miſery, or that they may not be made in any degree miſerable, if but the ſmalleſt degree of *prepollent* good can ariſe from it. Nay, any number of innocent beings might be placed in a ſtate of abſolute and eternal miſery, provided amends is made for their miſery by producing at the ſame time a greater number of beings in a greater degree happy. For wherein would this be worſe than producing a leſs rather than a greater degree of good, or than producing the exceſs only of the happineſs above the miſery, without any degree of the latter? What makes the difference between communicating happineſs to a *ſingle being* in ſuch a manner, as that it ſhall be only the exceſs of his enjoyments above his ſufferings; and communicating happineſs to a *ſyſtem of beings* in ſuch a manner that a *great* number of them ſhall be totally miſerable, but a *greater* number happy? Would there be nothing in ſuch a procedure that was not right and juſt; eſpecially could we conceive the ſufferings of the unhappy part to be, in any way, the occaſion or means of greater happineſs to the reſt? Is a man, be his relations or kindneſſes to another what they will, capable of receiving no injury from him

him by any actions not deterimental to the publick? Might a man innocently ruin any number of his fellow-creatures, provided he cauſes in a greater degree the good of others? Such conſequences are plainly ſhocking to our natural ſentiments; but I know not how to avoid them on the principles I am examining.—It is indeed far from eaſy to determine what degree of ſuperior good would compenſate the irreparable and undeſerved ruin of *one* perſon; or what overbalance of happineſs would be great enough to juſtify the abſolute miſery of one innocent being *. Be theſe things however

* There are ſome actions, ſays *Cicero*, ſo foul, that a good man would not do them to ſave his country. *De Officiis*, Lib. I. Chap. XLV.—He praiſes *Fabius*, the Roman general, for ſending back to *Pyrrhus* a deſerter, who had offered privately to poiſon him for a proper reward from the *Romans*: And alſo *Ariſtides* for rejecting, becauſe not juſt, a propoſal very profitable to his country, made to him by *Themiſtocles*. Ib. Lib. III. Chap. XXII.—To the queſtion: Would not a good man, when ſtarving with hunger, force food from another man who is worthleſs? he anſwers, by no means; and gives this reaſon for it: *Non enim mihi eſt vita mea utilior, quam animi talis affectio, nemiuem ut violem commodi mei gratia.*—The like anſwer he gives to the queſtion, Whether a virtuous man would, in order to ſave his

however as they will; there is at leaſt enough in the conſiderations now propoſed to ſhew that publick happineſs cannot be the ſole ſtandard and meaſure of juſtice and injuſtice. But without having recourſe to them, the deciſion of this queſtion might perhaps be reſted entirely on the determination any impartial perſon ſhall find himſelf obliged to give in the following caſe.——Imagine any object which cannot be divided or enjoyed in common by two perſons, and which alſo would be of equal advantage to both: Is it not fit, ſetting aſide all diſtant conſequences, that the *firſt poſſeſſor*, or he whoſe ſkill and labour had procured it, ſhould have the uſe and enjoyment of it rather than the other? The affirmative in this caſe is very obvious *; and he who admits it, cannot

his life in a ſhipwreck, thruſt a worthleſs man from a plank he had ſeized. Ibid. Chap. XXIII.—His deciſion alſo in the caſe of the famine at *Rhodes* is well known.

* There is now leſs occaſion for ſaying much on this point, ſince Dr. *Hutcheſon*, in his *Syſtem of Moral Philoſophy*, not long ſince publiſhed, Book II. p. 253, *&c.* Ch. III. has acknowledged that we *immediately* approve of private juſtice as well as of veracity, without referring them to a ſyſtem or to publick intereſt. But I know not well how to reconcile with this his general method

cannot think that there is no such origin of property as I have assigned.

What may have contributed towards deceiving some here, is the connexion observable in general between cruelty and injustice; but were these more inseparable than they are, we should have no reason for confounding them. A little reflexion may shew an unbiassed person, that the notion of an action's being *unjust* is different from that of its being *cruel, inhuman*, or *unkind*. How else could the guilt of a *cruel* action appear always highly aggravated by its being likewise *unjust*? I am sensible it may be replied to this, that the injustice attending an act

method of treating the subject of justice and rights, and particularly his saying, in the same chapter, that the ultimate notion of a *right*, is that which *tends to the universal good*, p. 266.——His chapter on the *rights of necessity*, Vol. II. may be particularly worth consulting on this occasion; in which he seems to allow, that some laws may be so *sacred* (such as those forbidding perjury, abjuring the true God, and particular kinds of treachery and injustice) that scarce any pleas of necessity to prevent impending evils, or obtain superior good, will justify a departure from them. One cannot help considering here, what it is he means by the *sacredness* of a law. Surely, not its importance as a means of private or publick good; for this would make even a doubt on this point ridiculous.

of

of cruelty, adding to the private damage done by it a damage alſo to the publick, makes it appear more cruel, and therefore more vicious. But how can it be imagined that remote conſiderations of ill effects to the publick (many of which are not immediately diſcovered by thoſe who *ſearch* for them) are always adverted to by the bulk of men, ſo as to make the ſimple and illiterate in ſome caſes even better judges of what is juſt and unjuſt, than the learned and ſtudious? Or how can any one think that the guilt of actions producing on the whole damages ſtrictly equal, would not appear aggravated, if accompanied with injury and injuſtice?

An obſervation already made, is no where more obvious and remarkable, than on the ſubject we are now examining. When all things are alike, and no one can pretend that an object belongs to him rather than another, the moſt minute circumſtance is ſufficient to turn the balance, and to confer a true and full right. Thus, a remote relation to what is my property, contiguity, firſt ſight, and innumerable other particulars in themſelves frivolous, will give ground for a claim,

claim, which when nothing equivalent can be oppoſed to them, ſhall be valid.

The power a perſon has to transfer his property, is part of the idea of property, and equally intelligible with the power he has to diſpoſe of his labour or advice, and to employ them in whatever way and for whatever purpoſes he thinks proper.

It may tend to remove ſome further difficulties which may occur to one who conſiders this ſubject, to remark, that amongſt near relations and intimate friends, and alſo with reſpect to uſeful objects of which there is no ſcarcity, the ideas of property are always relaxed in proportion to the intimacy of the relation or friendſhip, and the degree of plenty. The reaſon in the firſt caſe may be chiefly the conſent of the proprietors, which, where known or reaſonably preſumed, always removes the unlawfulneſs of taking and employing what belongs to them. Between married perſons there has been a formal ſurrender of their reſpective poſſeſſions to one another: and between intimate friends, though no profeſſions may have paſſed directly expreſſing ſuch a ſurrender, there is always underſtood to prevail ſuch an union as implies it.

In the latter caſe, there is alſo a tacit and preſumed ſurrender; for it cannot be conceived that any one ſhould be unwilling to reſign, or that he ſhould at all attach himſelf to any thing, the loſs of which he can immediately and with perfect eaſe repair.——Beſides; enquiries concerning rights are only proper, as far as an object is of ſome value real or imaginary, mediate or immediate. To aſk to whom belongs the property of what is of no value, is trifling and abſurd: It is the ſame as to aſk who ought to have the uſe of what is of no uſe. Now any *particular portion* of natural ſupplies which are ſo common as to bear no price, as water or air, is to be deemed really worthleſs, and ſo far no object of property. It is not certainly in the leaſt wonderful, that objects procurable without any trouble; which can be the produce of no one's labour; which when taken from perſons are always replaced immediately by others of the ſame value; and a ſufficient quantity of which none can want: It is not, I ſay, in the leaſt wonderful that objects of this kind ſhould be incapable of acquiring the relation of property to particular perſons, and that no injuſtice ſhould be poſſible to be committed

committed by any ſeizure of them. No objections then can, with any reaſon, be derived from hence againſt the account that has been given of property.

The particular rules of *juſtice* are various, and there are many inſtances in which it is difficult to determine what it requires. Of theſe it is not requiſite that I ſhould take any notice: But it is very proper to obſerve, that, though I cannot allow public good to be the *ſole* original of juſtice, yet, undoubtedly, it has great influence upon it, and is *one* important ground of many of its maxims. It gives a very conſiderable additional force to the *rights* of men, and, in ſome caſes, entirely creates them.—Nothing is more evident than that, in order to the happineſs of the world and the being of ſociety, poſſeſſions ſhould be ſtable, and property ſacred, and not liable, except upon very extraordinary occaſions, to be violated. In conſidering what common intereſt requires, we are, beſides the immediate effects of actions, to conſider what their general tendencies are, what they open the way to, and what would actually be the conſequences if all were to act alike. If under the pre-

tence of greater indigence, ſuperfluity to the owner, or intention to give to a worthier perſon, I may take away a man's property, or adjudge it from him in a court of juſtice; another or all, in the ſame circumſtances, may do ſo; and thus the boundaries of property would be overthrown, and general anarchy, diſtruſt and ſavageneſs be introduced.—Men in general, however, as before obſerved, do not conſider this; much leſs is it, by ſome views of this kind and theſe only, that their ſentiments on this ſubject are always regulated.

The motives to the practice of juſtice are the ſame with thoſe to virtuous practice in general, and will be the ſubject of the next chapter.

I omit taking any particular notice here of *juſtice*, as it ſignifies the due treatment of beings according to their different moral characters, or the equitable diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments; becauſe it has been particularly conſidered elſewhere *.

Theſe then are the main and leading branches of Virtue. It may not be poſſible properly

* See Chap. IV.

properly to comprehend all the particular inſtances of it under any number of heads. It is by attending to the different relations, circumſtances, and qualifications of beings, and the natures and tendencies of objects, and by examining into the whole truth of every caſe, that we judge what *is* or *is not to be* done. And as there is an endleſs variety of caſes, and the ſituations of agents and objects are ever changing; the univerſal law of rectitude, though in the abſtract idea of it always invariably the ſame, muſt be continually varying in its *particular* demands and obligations.

This leads me to obſerve, that however different from one another the heads which have been enumerated are, yet, from the very notion of them, as *heads of virtue*, it is plain, that they all run up to one general idea, and ſhould be conſidered as only different modifications and views of one original, all-governing law *. It is the ſame

 authority

* Ουτω δη και περι των αρετων, καν ει πολλαι και παντοδαπαι εισιν, εν γε τι ειδος ταυτον απασαι εχουσι δι ο εσιν αρεται. *Plat.* in Men: "So likewiſe concerning the virtues; though "they are many and various, there is one common "idea belonging to them all, by which they *are* "virtues."

authority that enjoins, the ſame truth and right that oblige, the ſame eternal reaſon that commands in them all. Virtue thus conſidered, is neceſſarily *one* thing. No one part of it can be ſeparated from another.

From hence we may learn, by the way, how defective and inconſiſtent a thing *partial virtue* is. The ſame law that requires piety, requires alſo benevolence, veracity, temperance, juſtice, gratitude, *&c.* All theſe reſt on the ſame foundation, and are alike our indiſpenſable duty. He, therefore, who *lives* in the neglect of any one of them, is as really a rebel againſt reaſon, and an apoſtate from righteouſneſs and order, as if he neglected them all. The authority of the law in one point is not different from its authority in another, and in all points. To tranſgreſs therefore in one point (I mean habitually and wilfully) is to throw off effectually our allegiance, and to trample on the whole authority of the law. True and genuine virtue muſt be uniform and univerſal. Nothing ſhort of an *entire* good character can avail to our acceptance. As long as any evil habit is retained, we cannot be denominated the loyal ſubjects of the divine government; we continue under the curſe of guilt;

guilt; ſlaves to vice, and unqualified for bliſs.—It will come in my way to obſerve more to this purpoſe hereafter.

There is another coincidence between the foregoing heads of virtue worth our notice. I mean, their agreeing very often in requiring the ſame actions. An act of *juſtice* may be alſo an act of *gratitude* and *beneficence*; and whatever any of theſe oblige us to, that alſo *piety* to God requires. Were *injuſtice*, *fraud*, *falſhood*, and a *neglect* of *private* good univerſally prevalent, what a dreadful ſtate would the world be in? and how would the ends of *benevolence* be defeated?—No one of the ſeveral virtues can be annihilated without the moſt pernicious conſequences to all the reſt. This, in a good meaſure, appears from what happens in the preſent ſtate of things; but, in the final iſſue of things, the harmony between them will be found much more ſtrict. Whatever exceptions may now happen, if we will look forwards to the whole of our exiſtence, the three great principles of the love of God, the love of man, and true ſelf-love, will always draw us the ſame way; and we have the utmoſt reaſon to aſſure ourſelves, that at laſt no one will be able to ſay he has bet-

tered himself by *any* unjust action, or that, though *less scrupulous* than others, he has been *more successful and happy*.

But though the heads of virtue beforementioned agree thus far in requiring the same course of action, yet they often also interfere. Though upon the whole, or when considered as making one *general system or plan of conduct*, there is a strict coincidence between them, yet in examining *single acts* and *particular cases*, we find that they lead us contrary ways.—This perhaps has not been enough attended to, and therefore I shall particularly insist upon it.

What creates the difficulty in morals of determining what is right or wrong, in many particular cases, is chiefly the interference now mentioned in such cases between the different general principles of virtue.—Thus, the pursuit of the happiness of others is a duty, and so is the pursuit of private happiness; and though, on the whole, these are inseparably connected, in many particular instances, one of them cannot be pursued without giving up the other. When the publick happiness is very great, and the private very inconsiderable, no difficulties appear. We pronounce as confidently, that the

the one ought to give way to the other, as we do, that either alone ought to be purſued. But when the former is diminiſhed, and the latter increaſed to a certain degree, doubt ariſes; and we may thus be rendered entirely incapable of determining what we ought to chuſe. We have the moſt ſatisfactory perception, that we ought to ſtudy our own good, and, within certain limits, prefer it to that of another; but who can ſay how far, mark preciſely theſe limits, and inform us in all caſes of oppoſition between them, where right and wrong and indifference take place?—In like manner; the nearer attachments of nature or friendſhip, the obligations to veracity, fidelity, gratitude, or juſtice, may interfere with private and publick good, and it is not poſſible for us to judge always and accurately, what degrees or circumſtances of any one of theſe compared with the others, will or will not cancel its obligation, and juſtify the violation of it.—It is thus likewiſe, that the different foundations of property give riſe to contrary claims, and that ſometimes it becomes very hard to ſay which of different titles to an object is the beſt.—If we examine the various intricate and diſputed

caſes

caſes in morality, we ſhall, I believe, find that it is always ſome interference of this kind that produces the obſcurity. Truth and right in all circumſtances, require one determinate way of acting; but ſo variouſly may different obligations combine with or oppoſe each other in particular caſes, and ſo imperfect are our diſcerning faculties, that it cannot but happen, that we ſhould be frequently in the dark, and that different perſons ſhould judge differently, according to the different views they have of the ſeveral moral principles. Nor is this leſs unavoidable, or more to be wondered at, than that in matters of mere ſpeculation, we ſhould be at a loſs to know what is true, when the arguments for and againſt a propoſition appear nearly equal.

The principles themſelves, it ſhould be remembered, are ſelf-evident; and to conclude the contrary, or to aſſert that there are no moral diſtinctions, becauſe of the obſcurity attending ſeveral caſes wherein a competition ariſes between the ſeveral principles of morality, is very unreaſonable. It is not unlike concluding, that, becauſe in ſome circumſtances we cannot, by their appearance to the eye, judge of the diſtances and

and magnitude of bodies, therefore we never can; becauſe undeniable principles may be uſed in proving and oppoſing particular doctrines, therefore theſe principles are not undeniable; or becauſe it may not in ſome inſtances be eaſy to determine what will be the effect of different forces, variouſly compounded and acting contrary to each other; therefore we can have no aſſurance what any of them acting ſeparately will produce, or ſo much as know that there is any ſuch thing as force *.

Theſe

* How unreaſonable would it be to conclude from the difficulty there often is to determine the bounds of *equality* and *inequality* between quantities, or from its appearing doubtful to us in ſome inſtances, whether quantities are the *ſame* or *different*, that ſuch quantities are in reality neither equal nor unequal, neither the ſame nor different, or that in ſuch inſtances *equality* and *inequality*, *ſameneſs* and *difference* run into one another? Juſt as unreaſonable would it be to conclude, from its being often difficult to define the bounds of right and wrong, or from its appearing doubtful to us in ſome nice caſes what way of acting is *right* or *wrong*, that in ſuch caſes, there is no particular way of acting truly and certainly right or wrong, or that *right* and *wrong* in theſe caſes loſe their diſtinction. The weakneſs of our diſcerning faculties cannot in any caſe affect truth. Things themſelves continue invariably the ſame, however different our opinions of them may be, or whatever doubts or difficulties may perplex us.

Theſe obſervations may be of ſome uſe in helping us to determine, how far and in what ſenſe, morality is capable of demonſtration. There are undoubtedly a variety of moral principles and maxims, which, to gain aſſent, need only to be underſtood: And I ſee not why ſuch propoſitions as theſe, "gratitude is due to benefactors; reverence "is due to our Creator; it is right to ſtudy "our own happineſs; an innocent being "ought not to be abſolutely miſerable; it "is wrong to take from another the fruit "of his labour," and others of the like kind, may not be laid down and uſed as axioms, the truth of which appears as irreſiſtibly as the truth of thoſe which are the foundation of Geometry. But the caſe is very different when we come to conſider *particular* effects. What is meant by demonſtrating morality, can only be reducing theſe under the general ſelf-evident principles of morality, or making out with certainty their relation to them. It would be happy for us were this always poſſible. We ſhould then be eaſed of many painful doubts, know univerſally and infallibly what we ſhould do and avoid, and have nothing to attend to beſides conforming our practice to our knowledge. How impracticable

practicable this is every one muſt ſee.—Were benevolence the only virtuous principle, we could by no means apply it always without any danger of miſtake to action; becauſe we cannot be more ſure, a particular external action is an inſtance of beneficence, than we are of the tendencies and conſequences of that action. The ſame holds true upon the ſuppoſition that ſelf-love is the only principle of virtue. Until we can in every particular know what is good or bad for ourſelves and others, and diſcover the powers and qualities of objects, and what will reſult from any application of them to one another, we cannot always demonſtrate what either of theſe principles requires, but muſt continue liable to frequent and unavoidable errors in our moral judgment.—In like manner, what our duty to God, the regard due to the properties and rights of others, and gratitude require, we muſt be at a loſs about, as far as in any circumſtances we cannot be ſure what the will of God is, where property is lodged, or who our benefactors are and what are our obligations to them.—Thus, if we conſider the ſeveral moral principles ſingly (or as liable to no limitations from one another)

we

we find that we muſt frequently be very uncertain how it is beſt to act.

But if we further recollect, that in order to diſcover what is right in a caſe, we ought to extend our views to all the different *heads* of virtue, to examine how far each is concerned, and compare their reſpective influence and demands; and that at the ſame time (as juſt now explained) they often interfere; a ſecond ſource of inſuperable difficulties will appear. It is not alone ſufficient to ſatisfy us that an action is to be done, that we know it will be the means of good to others: we are alſo to conſider how it affects ourſelves, what it is in regard to juſtice, and all the other circumſtances the caſe may involve muſt be taken in, and weighed, if we would form a true judgment concerning it. In reality, before we can be capable of deducing demonſtrably, accurately and particularly, the whole rule of *right* in every inſtance, we muſt poſſeſs univerſal and unerring knowledge. It muſt be above the power of any finite underſtanding to do this. He only who knows all truth, is acquainted with the whole law of truth in all its importance, perfection and extent.

Once

Once more; we may, by conſiderations of this kind, be helped in forming a judgment of the different ſentiments and practices in ſeveral points of morality, which have obtained in different countries and ages. The foregoing general principles all men at all times have agreed in. It cannot be ſhewn that there have ever been any human beings who have had no ideas of property and juſtice, of the rectitude of veracity, gratitude, benevolence, prudence, and religious worſhip. All the difference has been about particular uſages and practices, of which it is impoſſible but different perſons muſt have different ideas, according to the various opinions they entertain of their relation to the univerſally acknowledged moral principles, or of their ends, connexions, and tendencies.——Thoſe who plead for paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance, think that to be required by divine command, or publick good; which others, with more reaſon, think to be reproachful to human nature, and deſtructive of the very end of magiſtracy and government.—Thoſe nations amongſt whom the cuſtoms of expoſing children and aged perſons have prevailed,

prevailed, approved of these customs upon the opinion of their being conducive to the general advantage, and friendly to the sufferers themselves.—— Self-murder amongst some of the antients was justified and applauded, because considered as a method of extricating themselves from misery, which none but men of superior bravery could use; and not as, what it truly is, an act of very criminal discontent and impatience, a desertion of the station assigned us by Providence, and a cowardly flight from the duties and difficulties of life.—As far as any persons have ever approved persecution, it could only be under the notion of its doing God service; its being an execution of his wrath upon his enemies; a just punishment of obstinacy and impiety; and the necessary means of discountenancing pernicious errors, and preventing the propagation of what tends to subvert true religion, and ruin the souls of men.—The most superstitious practices, and ridiculous rights of worship, have gained credit and support, merely because apprehended to be pleasing to God, means of procuring his favour, and proper expressions of homage and adoration.

In

In theſe, and innumerable other inſtances of the like kind, the *practical* errors of men have ariſen plainly from their *ſpeculative* errors; from their miſtaking facts, or not ſeeing the whole of a caſe; whence it cannot but often happen, that they will think thoſe practices right, which, if they had juſter opinions of facts and caſes, they would unavoidably condemn. The rules of judging are univerſally the ſame. Thoſe who approve, and thoſe who diſapprove, go upon the ſame principles. The diſagreement is produced by the different application of them. The error lies in imagining that to fall under a particular ſpecies of virtue, which does not. And it is juſt as reaſonable to expect diſagreement here, as in the application of the received principles of knowledge and aſſent in general. Nor would it be more extravagant to conclude that men have not ſpeculative reaſon, becauſe of the diverſity in their ſpeculative opinions, than it is to conclude, they have no powers of moral perception, or that there is no fixed ſtandard of morality, becauſe of the diverſity in men's opinions, concerning the fitneſs or unfitneſs, lawfulneſs or unlawfulneſs, of *particular practices*. Until men can be raiſed

above defective knowledge, and ſecured againſt partial and inadequate views, they muſt continue liable to believe caſes and facts and the tendencies of actions, to be otherwiſe than they are; and, conſequently, to form falſe judgments concerning right and wrong. And, till the bulk of mankind can be ſecured from the moſt groſs deluſions and taking up the wildeſt opinions, they muſt continue liable to judgments of this kind the moſt groſsly wrong.

It ſhould be alſo remembered, that it is not eaſy to determine how far our natural ſentiments may be altered by cuſtom, education, and example; or to ſay, what degree of undue attachment to ſome qualities, and vivacity to ſome ideas above others, they may give, or how much depravity and blindneſs they may introduce into our moral and intellectual powers. Notions the moſt ſtupid may, through their influence, come to be rooted in the mind beyond the poſſibility of being eradicated, antipathies given to objects naturally the moſt agreeable, and ſenſation itſelf perverted.

It would be unreaſonable to conclude from hence, as ſome are diſpoſed to do, that

that all we are is derived from education and habit; that we can never tell, when we are free from their influence, and believe on juſt evidence; or that there are no natural ſenſations and deſires at all, and no principles of truth in themſelves certain and invariable, and forcing univerſal aſſent.—Education and habit can give us no new ideas. The power they have ſuppoſes ſomewhat natural as their foundation. Were it not for the natural powers by which we perceive pleaſure and pain, good and evil, beauty and deformity, the ideas of them could never be excited in us, any more than the ideas of colour in perſons born blind; and no prejudices could be communicated to us for or againſt particular objects, under any notions of this kind.—Were there no ideas of proportion, ſimilitude, exiſtence, identity, &c. eſſential to our underſtandings, we ſhould loſe all capacity of knowledge and judgment, and there would be no poſſibility of being miſled, or of being in any way influenced by wrong biaſſes. Neither, had we no natural ideas of virtue and vice, could we be capable of any approbation or diſapprobation, any love or hatred of actions and characters otherwiſe than as

advantageous or diſadvantageous to us. All that cuſtom and education can do, is to alter the direction of natural ſentiments and ideas, and to connect them with wrong objects.—It is that part of our moral conſtitution which depends on inſtinct, that is chiefly liable to the corruption produced by theſe cauſes. The *ſenſible horror* at vice, and *attachment* to virtue, may be impaired, the conſcience ſeared, the nature of particular practices miſtaken, the ſenſe of ſhame weakened, the judgment darkened, the voice of reaſon ſtifled, and ſelf-deception practiſed, to the moſt lamentable and fatal degree. Yet the grand lines and primary principles of morality are ſo deeply wrought into our hearts, and one with our minds, that they will be for ever legible. The general approbation of certain virtues, and diſlike of their contraries, muſt always remain, and cannot be eraſed but with the deſtruction of all intellectual perception. The moſt depraved never ſink ſo low, as to loſe all moral diſcernment, all ideas of right and wrong, juſtice and injuſtice, honour and diſhonour. This appears ſufficiently from the judgments they paſs on the actions of others; from the reſentment they diſcover when-

whenever they are *themſelves* the objects of ill treatment; and from the inward uneaſineſs and remorſe, which they cannot avoid feeling, and by which, on ſome occaſions, they are ſeverely tormented. All the ſatisfaction and peace within themſelves, which they are capable of enjoying, proceeds, in a great meaſure, from a ſtudied neglect of reflexion, and from their having learned to diſguiſe their vices under the appearance of ſome virtuous or innocent qualities; which ſhews, that ſtill vice is an object ſo foul and frightful, that they cannot bear the direct view of it in themſelves, or embrace it in its naked form. But, after all, were every obſervation of this kind wrong, little regard would be due, in theſe enquiries, to what takes place amongſt thoſe whom we know to be the corrupt and perverted part of the ſpecies. Such, moſt certainly, cannot be the proper perſons by whom to judge of truth, or from whom to take our eſtimate of human nature.

The ſources of error and diſagreement now inſiſted on, would produce, very conſiderable effects, though all the particulars of duty and rectitude were, in themſelves,

plain and eaſy to be determined; for that ought to be very plain indeed, about which great differences would not be occaſioned by educations, tempers, views, and degrees of ſagacity, ſo different as thoſe of mankind; and inattention, prejudices, and corruptions ſo great as thoſe which prevail amongſt them.—But, if we will recollect the obſervations which have been made concerning the interference between the principles of morality, and the impoſſibility of a complete and ſcientifick deduction of what we ought to do and avoid in particular circumſtances, we ſhall own, that the ſubject itſelf is often involved in real darkneſs, and attended with inſurmountable difficulties, which, therefore, muſt be a further ground of much greater and more unavoidable diſagreements.

Upon the whole; what has been ſaid ſeems ſufficiently to account for the diverſity of mens ſentiments concerning moral matters; and it appears to be reaſonable to expect, that, in the ſenſe and manner I have explained, they ſhould be no leſs various, than their ſentiments concerning any other matters.

I ſhall

I ſhall only add, that though all men, in all caſes, judged rightly what is virtue and right behaviour, there would ſtill prevail a very conſiderable variety in their moral practices in different ages and countries. The reaſon is obvious: In different ages and circumſtances of the world, the ſame practices often have not the ſame connexions, tendencies, and effects. The ſtate of human affairs is perpetually changing, and, in the ſame period of time, it is very different in different nations. Amidſt this variety, it is impoſſible that the ſubject-matter of virtue ſhould continue preciſely the ſame. New obligations muſt ariſe, and the proprieties of conduct muſt vary, as new connexions take place, and new cuſtoms, laws, and political conſtitutions are introduced. Many practices, very warrantable and proper under one form of government, or in the firſt eſtabliſhment of a community, or amongſt people of a particular genius, and where particular regulations and opinions prevail, may be quite wrong in another ſtate of things, or amongſt people of other characters and cuſtoms. Amongſt the antient *Spartans*, we are told, theft was countenanced. The little value they had

for wealth, and many circumſtances in the ſtate of their affairs, might juſtly relax their ideas of property, and render every inſtance of taking from another what he poſſeſſed, not the ſame that it is now amongſt us. Some virtues or accompliſhments may be more uſeful and more difficult, in ſome circumſtances of countries and governments, than in others; and this may give juſt occaſion for their being more applauded. Other inſtances, more obvious and unexceptionable of what is now meant, may eaſily offer themſelves to the reader; and in conſidering the diverſity of ſentiments amongſt mankind concerning any particular practices, it will be right, amongſt other things, not to overlook the difference in the real ſtate of the caſe, which the differences of times and places make, and how far they alter the relation of ſuch practices to the general principles of morality.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Nature and Eſſentials of Virtue in Practice, *as diſtinguiſhed from* abſolute Virtue; *and, the Principle of Action in a virtuous Agent.*

BEFORE I enter on the diſcuſſion of the principal point to be conſidered in this chapter, it is neceſſary a diſtinction on which what will be ſaid is founded, and to which I have before had occaſion to refer, ſhould be diſtinctly explained: I mean, the diſtinction of virtue into ABSTRACT or ABSOLUTE virtue, and PRACTICAL or RELATIVE virtue.

It will, I think, plainly appear, that there is a juſt ground for this diſtinction: And we cannot, without attending to it, have an accurate view of the nature of virtue, or avoid

avoid a good deal of embarraſſment in our enquiries into it.

ABSTRACT virtue is, moſt properly, a quality of the external action or event. It denotes what an action is, conſidered independently of the *ſenſe* of the agent; or what, *in itſelf* and *abſolutely*, it is right *ſuch* an agent, in *ſuch* circumſtances, ſhould do; and what, if he judged truly, he would judge he ought to do.—— PRACTICAL *virtue*, on the contrary, has a neceſſary relation to, and dependence upon, the opinion of the agent concerning his actions. It ſignifies what he ought to do, *upon ſuppoſition* of his having ſuch and ſuch ſentiments. — In a ſenſe, not entirely different from this, good actions have been by ſome divided into ſuch as are *materially* good, and ſuch as are *formally* ſo.—Moral agents are liable to miſtake the circumſtances they are in, and, conſequently, to form erroneous judgments concerning their own obligations. This ſuppoſes, that theſe obligations have a real exiſtence, independent of their judgments. But, when they are in any manner miſtaken, it is not to be imagined, that then nothing remains obligatory;

gatory; for there is a ſenſe in which it may be ſaid, that what any being, in the ſincerity of his heart, *thinks* he ought to do, he *indeed* ought to do, and would be juſtly blameable if he omitted to do, though contradictory to what, in the former ſenſe, is his duty.—It would be trifling to object to this, that it implies, that an action may, at the ſame time, be both right and wrong; for it implies this only, as the rightneſs and wrongneſs of actions are conſidered in different views. A magiſtrate who ſhould adjudge an eſtate to the perſon whoſe right it *appears* to be, upon a great overbalance of evidence, would certainly do right in *one* ſenſe; though, ſhould the oppoſite claimant, after all, prove to be the true proprietor, he would as certainly do wrong in *another* ſenſe.

This diſtinction indeed cannot be rejected, without aſſerting, that whatever we *think* things to be, that they *are*; that we can, in *no ſenſe*, ever do wrong, without incurring guilt and blame; that while we follow our judgments, we cannot *err* in our conduct; that though, through involuntary miſtake, a man breaks the moſt important engagements, hurts his beſt friends,

or

or beſtows his bounty on the moſt worthleſs objects; though, through religious zeal and a blind ſuperſtition, he commits the moſt ſhocking barbarities, imagining he hereby does God ſervice, and, from an apprehenſion of their lawfulneſs, practiſes violence and deceit; there is yet no ſenſe in which he contradicts rectitude, or in which it can be truly affirmed he acts amiſs. Thus the difference between an *enlightened* and an *erroneous* conſcience would vaniſh entirely; no miſtake of right would be poſſible; all the fancies of men concerning their duty would be alike juſt, and the moſt ignorant as well acquainted with the ſubject-matter of virtue, as the moſt knowing.—But to what purpoſe is it to multiply words on this occaſion, when it is ſo apparent, that all enquiries after our duty, all inſtructions in it, all deliberations how it becomes us to act in the various circumſtances into which we are caſt, and the very expreſſions, *doing right*, and *perceiving right*, imply *objective rectitude*, or ſomething ſeparate from, and independent of the mind and its perceptions, to be enquired after and perceived?

It

It may be worth our notice here, that from knowing the nature and capacities of a being, his relations, connexions, and dependencies, and the conſequences of his actions, the whole of what he ought to do, in the *firſt* ſenſe, may be determined, without once attending to his private judgment. But, in order to determine this in the *latter* ſenſe, the ſingle point neceſſary to be conſidered is this judgment; or the real apprehenſions of the being concerning what he does, at the time of doing it.—The former requires the greateſt variety of circumſtances to be taken into conſideration, and is no more poſſible to be by us univerſally and unerringly determined, than the whole truth on any other ſubject. The latter, on the contrary, has few difficulties attending it. The greateſt degree of doubt about the former, may leave us in no ſuſpence about this. Our rule is to follow our conſciences ſteadily and faithfully, after we have taken care to inform them in the beſt manner we can; and, where we doubt, to take the *ſafeſt* ſide, and not to venture to *do* any thing concerning which we have doubts, when we know there can be nothing amiſs in *omitting* it; and, on the contrary, not to *omit* any thing about which

which we doubt, when we know there can be no harm in *doing* it. But, if we doubt whether the performance, and alſo whether the omiſſion is right; in theſe circumſtances, when the doubts on both ſides are equal, and we cannot get better information, it becomes *practically* indifferent which way we act. When there is any preponderancy, it is evident we ought to take that way, in which there ſeems to us the leaſt danger of going a-ſtray.—It is happy for us, that our title to the character of virtuous beings depends not upon the juſtneſs of our opinions, or the conſtant *objective* rectitude of all we do; but upon the conformity of our actions to the ſincere conviction of our minds. A ſuſpicion of the contrary, were it to prevail, would prove of very bad conſequence, by cauſing us to diſtruſt our only guide, and throwing us into a ſtate of endleſs and inextricable perplexity. In this ſtate it would be no relief to us to reſolve upon total inaction, as not knowing but that, when acting with the moſt upright views, we may be the moſt blame-worthy; for ſuch a reſolution might itſelf prove the greateſt crime, and fix upon us the greateſt guilt.

I have

I have applied the epithets *real* and *abſolute* to the firſt kind of virtue, for an obvious reaſon; but care ſhould be taken not to imagine, that the latter is not alſo, in a different ſenſe and view, *real* virtue. It is truly and abſolutely right, that a being ſhould do what the reaſon of his mind, though perhaps unhappily miſinformed, requires of him; or what, according to his beſt judgment, he is perſuaded to be the will of God. If he neglects this, he becomes neceſſarily and juſtly the object of his own diſlike, and forfeits all pretenſions to integrity *.

Theſe

* How abſurd then are all claims to dominion over conſcience? Such a dominion is little to the purpoſe of thoſe who have pleaded for it, if it does not mean a power or right to oblige perſons to act againſt their private judgment, that is, a *right* to oblige perſons to *do wrong*. Every man ought to be left to follow his conſcience becauſe then only he acts virtuouſly. Where the plea of conſcience is real, (and who but the ſearcher of hearts can judge how far in general it is or is not ſo?) it is wicked to lay reſtraints upon it. For it is violating the rights of what is above all things ſacred, attempting to make hypocrites and knaves of men, and eſtabliſhing *human* authority on the ruins of *divine*.—All that can ever be right, is neceſſary *ſelf-defence*, when the conſciences of men lead them to hurt others, is no

Theſe different kinds of rectitude have ſuch an affinity that we are very prone to confound them in our thoughts and diſcourſes; and a particular attention is neceſſary,

no leſs a *contradiction to common ſenſe*, than it is *impiety*, for any men to pretend to a power to oblige their fellow men to worſhip God in any manner different from that which is moſt agreeable to their conſciences; that is, in any way but that in which alone it is acceptable and right in *them* to do it.—The civil magiſtrate goes out of his province, when he interpoſes in religious differences. His office is only to ſecure the liberties and properties of thoſe under his juriſdiction; to protect *all* good ſubjects; to preſerve the peace amongſt contending ſects, and to hinder them from encroaching on one another.

I hope I ſhall be excuſed, if I take this opportunity to add, that we have not much leſs than demonſtration, that God will not and cannot grant, to any particular men or ſet of men, a power to direct the faith and practices of others in religious matters, without making them, at the ſame time, *infallible* and *impeccable*. For in what, otherwiſe, muſt ſuch a grant iſſue? What would it be, but a grant of power to miſlead and deceive? What errors, what corruptions, what deſolation do we know have been actually produced by the pretence to it without theſe qualifications?—It is a part of the peculiar happineſs of this nation, that principles of this kind have been ſo well explained, and are now ſo much received in it. May they be ſtill more received, and better underſtood; and our conſtitution and laws, already the beſt in the world, grow to a perfect conformity to them. May the number of thoſe who are for giving

ſary, in order to know when we ſpeak of the one or the other. It is hardly poſſible, in writing on morality, to avoid blending them in our language, and frequently including both, even in the ſame ſentence. But enough has been ſaid to enable an attentive perſon to ſee when and how this is done, and to prepare the way for that explanation of the nature and eſſentials of PRACTICAL Virtue, to which I ſhall now proceed.

What firſt of all offers itſelf here, is, that *practical* virtue ſuppoſes LIBERTY.—Whether all will acknowledge this or not, it cannot be omitted.

The *liberty* I here mean is the ſame with the power of *acting* and *determining*: And it is ſelf-evident, that where ſuch a power is wanting, there can be no moral capacities. As far as it is true of a being that he *acts*, ſo far he muſt *himſelf* be the cauſe of

giving up their liberty and independency, and ſubmitting to human authority in religious matters, be continually decreaſing; and the joyful time ſoon come, when all ſlaviſh principles ſhall be univerſally contemned and deteſted.

the action, and therefore not neceſſarily determined to act. Let any one try to put a ſenſe on the expreſſions; *I will*; *I act*; which is conſiſtent with ſuppoſing, that the volition or action does not proceed from myſelf. Virtue ſuppoſes determination, and determination ſuppoſes a determiner; and a determiner that determines not himſelf, is a palpable contradiction. Determination requires an efficient cauſe. If this cauſe is the being himſelf, I plead for no more. If not, then it is no longer *his* determination; that is, *he* is no longer the determiner, but the motive, or whatever elſe any one will ſay to be the cauſe of the determination. To aſk, what effects *our* determinations, is the very ſame with aſking who did an action, after being informed that ſuch a one did it. In ſhort; who muſt not *feel* the abſurdity of ſaying, *my* volitions are produced by a *foreign* cauſe, that is, are not *mine*; I determine *voluntarily*, and yet *neceſſarily*?— We have, in truth, the ſame conſtant and neceſſary conſciouſneſs of liberty, that we have that we think, chuſe, will, or even exiſt; and whatever to the contrary any perſons may ſay, it is impoſſible for them in earneſt

to

to think they have no active, self-moving powers, and are not the causes of *their own* volitions, or not to ascribe to *themselves*, what they must be conscious *they* think and do.

But, not to enter much further into a question which has been strangely darkened by fallacious reasonings, and where there is so much danger of falling into a confusion of ideas, I would only observe, that it is hard to say what virtue and vice, commendation and blame, mean, if they do not suppose *agency*, free choice, and an absolute dominion over our resolutions *.— It has always been the *general*, and it is evidently the *natural* sense of mankind, that they cannot be accountable for what they have no power to avoid. Nothing can be more glaringly absurd, than applauding or reproaching ourselves for what we were no more the causes of, than our own beings, and what it was no more possible for us to prevent, than the returns of the seasons, or the revolutions of the planets. The whole

* *Motus enim voluntarius eam naturam in seipso continet, ut sit in nostra potestate, nobisque pareat.* Cic. de fato.

language of men, all their practical ſentiments and ſchemes, and the whole frame and order of human affairs, are founded upon the notion of liberty, and are utterly inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition, that nothing is made to depend on ourſelves, or that our purpoſes and determinations are not ſubjected to our own command, but the reſult of phyſical laws, not poſſible to be reſiſted.

If, upon examination, any of the advocates of the doctrine of neceſſity ſhould find, that what they mean by neceſſity is not inconſiſtent with the ideas of *agency* and *ſelf-determination*, there will be little room for farther diſputes; and that liberty, which I inſiſt upon as eſſential to morality, will be acknowledged; nor will it be at all neceſſary to take into conſideration, or to pay much regard to any difficulties relating * to the nature

* With reſpect to this, however, one may obſerve, that there ſeems to be very little myſterious in a man's chuſing to follow his judgment and deſires, or in his actually doing what he is *inclined* to do; which is what we mean when we ſay, motives determine him: Though, at the ſame time it be very plain, that motives can have no concern in *effecting* his determination, or that there is no *phyſical connexion* between his judgment and views, and

nature of that influence we commonly aſcribe to motives.

Secondly, *Intelligence* is another requiſite of practical morality. Some degree of this is neceſſary to the perception of moral good and evil; and without this perception, there can be no moral agency. It muſt not be imagined, that liberty comprehends or infers intelligence; for all the inferior orders of beings poſſeſs true liberty. Self-motion and activity, of ſome kind, are eſſential to every conſcious, living being.

and the actions conſequent upon them. What would be more abſurd than to ſay, that our inclinations act upon us, or compel us; that our deſires and fears *put* us into motion, or *produce* our volitions; that is, are *agents?* And yet, what is more conceivable, than that they may be the *occaſions* of our putting *curſelves* into motion?—That there is an eſſential and total difference between the ideas of an *efficient cauſe* and an *account* or *occaſion*, it would be trifling to go about to prove. What ſenſe would there be in ſaying, that the *ſituation* of a body, which may properly be the occaſion or account of its being ſtruck by another body, is the *efficient* of its motion or its *impeller?*—A particular diſcuſſion of this queſtion may be found in the CORRESPONDENCE between Dr. Prieſtley and Dr. Price, on the Subjects of MATERIALISM and NECESSITY. 8vo. printed for Mr. Johnſon in St. Paul's Church-yard.

There ſeems no difference between wanting all ſpontaneity, and being quite inanimate. —But though liberty does not ſuppoſe intelligence, yet intelligence plainly ſuppoſes liberty. For what has been now affirmed of all ſenſitive natures, is much more unexceptionably true of intelligent natures. A thinking, deſigning, reaſoning being, without liberty, without any inward, ſpontaneous, active, ſelf-directing principle, is what no one can frame any idea of. So unreaſonable are all objections to the making of free creatures; and ſo abſurd to aſk, why men were made ſo. But,

Thirdly, The main point now to be inſiſted on is, "that an agent cannot be juſtly "denominated *virtuous*, except he acts from "a conſciouſneſs of rectitude, and with "a regard to it as his *rule* and *end*." Though this obſervation appears to me undoubtedly true, and of the greateſt importance on this ſubject; yet I know there are many, whoſe aſſent to it will not be eaſily gained; and, therefore, it will be proper that I ſhould endeavour particularly to explain and prove it.

Liberty and *Reaſon* conſtitute the *capacity* of virtue. It is the *intention* that gives

it

it *actual being* in a character.——The reader muſt not here forget the diſtinction before explained. To mere theoretical virtue, or (if I may ſo ſpeak) the abſtract reaſons and fitneſſes of things, praiſe-worthineſs is not applicable. It is the actual conformity of the wills of moral agents to what they ſee or believe to be the fitneſſes of things, that is the object of our praiſe and eſteem. One of theſe may, perhaps, very properly be called the *virtue of the action*, in contradiſtinction from the other, which may be called the *virtue of the agent*. To the former, no particular intention is requiſite; for what is *objectively* right, may be done from any motive good or bad; and, therefore, from hence alone, no merit is communicated to the agent; nay, it is conſiſtent with the greateſt guilt. On the contrary, to the other the particular intention is what is moſt eſſential. When this is good, there is ſo far virtue, whatever is true of the *matter* of the action; for an agent, who does what is *objectively wrong*, may often be entitled to commendation.

It may poſſibly be of ſome advantage towards elucidating this matter, to conceive

that only as, in ſtrict propriety, *done* by a moral agent, which he *intends* to do. What ariſes beyond or contrary to his intention, however it may eventually happen, or be derived, by the connexion of natural cauſes, from his determination, ſhould not be imputed to him. Our own determinations alone are, moſt properly, our actions. Theſe alone we have abſolute power over, and are reſponſible for. It is at leaſt worth conſidering, in what different ſenſes, we are ſaid to do what we did, and what we did not *deſign* to do. The caſuality or efficiency implied in theſe caſes, is certainly far from being the ſame.—There ſeems indeed ſcarcely any thing more evident, than that there are two views or ſenſes, in which we commonly ſpeak of actions. Sometimes we mean by them, the determinations or volitions themſelves of a being, of which the intention is an eſſential part: And ſometimes we mean the real event, or external effect produced. With reſpect to a being poſſeſſed of infinite knowledge and power, theſe are always coincident. What ſuch a being deſigns and determines to do, is always the ſame with the actual event produced.

duced. But we have no reaſon to think this true of any inferior beings.

In further explaining and proving what I have now in view, it will be proper to ſhew, "that the perception of right and "wrong does *excite* to action, and is alone "a ſufficient *principle* of action;" after which we ſhall be better prepared for judging, "how far, without it, there can be "*practical virtue*."

Experience, and the reaſon of the thing, will, if we attentively conſult them, ſoon ſatisfy us about the firſt of theſe points. All men continually feel, that the perception of right and wrong excites to action; and it is ſo much their natural and unavoidable ſenſe that this is true, that there are few or none, who, upon having it at firſt propoſed to them, would not wonder at its being queſtioned. There are many ſuppoſable caſes and circumſtances, in which it is impoſſible to aſſign any other reaſon of action. Why would we, all circumſtances on both ſides being the ſame, help a *benefactor* rather than a *ſtranger*; or one to whom we had given promiſes, and made profeſſions of kindneſs, rather than one to whom we were under no engage-

engagements? Why would any good being chuſe ſuch methods to accompliſh his end as were conſiſtent with *faithfulneſs* and *veracity*, rather than ſuch as implied *deceit* and *falſhood*; though he knew the latter to be equally ſafe, or, in a great degree, even more ſafe, more eaſy and expeditious?—Is it only for our own ſakes, or out of a view to public utility, that we obey and honour the Deity?—How are we to account for a man's refraining from ſecret fraud, or his practiſing truth, ſincerity, equity, juſtice, and honour, in many particular inſtances of their interfering, or ſeeming to interfere, with private and publick good, as well as with his ſtrongeſt natural deſires?—Let any one, for example, try what reaſons he can find from benevolence or ſelf-intereſt, why an honeſt man, though in want, though ſure of being never ſuſpected, would not ſecure a good eſtate, eaſe and plenty to himſelf, and relief and aid to his neighbours, by ſecreting or interpolating a will by which it of right devolved on a worthleſs perſon, already ſufficiently provided for, and who, in all likelihood, would uſe it only to make himſelf and others miſerable? What could influence, in ſuch and many other like circumſtances,

cumſtances, beſides a *ſenſe of duty and honeſty?* Or what other univerſal motive can there be to the practice of juſtice?

But further, it ſeems extremely evident, that excitement belongs to the very ideas of moral right and wrong, and is eſſentially inſeparable from the apprehenſion of them. The account in a former chapter of *obligation*, is enough to ſhew this.—When we are conſcious that an action is *fit* to be done, or that it *ought* to be done, it is not conceivable that we can remain *uninfluenced*, or want a *motive* to action *. It would be to little purpoſe to argue much with a perſon, who would deny this; or who would maintain, that the *becomingneſs* or *reaſonableneſs* of an action is no reaſon *for* doing it; and the *immorality* or *unreaſonablneſs* of an action, no reaſon *againſt* doing it. An affection or inclination to rectitude cannot be ſeparated from the view of it †. The know-

* *Optimi quique permulta, ob eam unam cauſam, faciunt, quia deſet, quia rectum, quia honeſtum eſt.* Cic. *de finibus.* Lib. ii.

† Thoſe who own, that an action may not be leſs right, though certain to produce no overbalance of private pleaſure; and yet aſſert that nothing, but the proſpect

knowledge of what is right, without any approbation of it, or concern to practiſe it, is not conceivable or poſſible. And this knowledge will certainly be attended with *correſpondent*, *actual practice*, whenever there is nothing to oppoſe it. Why a *reaſonable* being acts *reaſonably*; why he has a diſpoſition to follow reaſon, and is not without averſion to wrong; why he chuſes to do what he knows he *ſhould* do, and cannot be wholly indifferent, whether he abſtains from that

proſpect of this to be obtained, can influence the will, muſt alſo maintain, that the mere rightneſs of an action, or the conſideration that it is fit to be done, apart from the conſideration of the pleaſure attending or following it, would leave us quite uninclined, and indifferent to the performance or omiſſion of it. This is ſo inconceivable, that thoſe whoſe principles oblige them to admit it, cannot, one would think, really mean by right and wrong the ſame with the reſt of mankind. That, ſuppoſing virtue to denote any thing diſtinct from pleaſure and independent of it, it is poſſible to *conceive*, that a virtuous action may not produce an overbalance of private pleaſure; or, which anſwers the purpoſe as well, that an agent may *believe* this of an action to be done by him, which yet he does not the leſs conſider as virtuous, it would be trifling to ſay any thing to prove: But this it is neceſſary thoſe, whoſe opinion I have now in in view, ſhould deny.

that which he knows is evil and criminal, and *not to be done*, are queſtions which need not, and which deſerve not to be anſwered.

Inſtincts, therefore, as before obſerved in other inſtances, are not neceſſary to the choice of ends. The intellectual nature is its own law. It has, within itſelf, a ſpring and guide of action which it cannot ſuppreſs or reject. Rectitude is itſelf an end, an ultimate end, an end ſuperior to all other ends, governing, directing and limiting them, and whoſe exiſtence and influence depend on nothing arbitrary. It preſides over all. Every appetite and faculty, every inſtinct and will, and all nature are ſubjected to it. To act from affection to it, is to act with light, and conviction, and knowledge. But acting from inſtinct is ſo far acting in the dark, and following a blind guide. Inſtinct *drives* and *precipitates*; but reaſon *commands*. The impulſes of *inſtinct* we may reſiſt, without doing any violence to ourſelves. Our higheſt merit and perfection often conſiſt in this. The dictates of *reaſon* we can, *in no inſtance*, contradict, without a ſenſe of ſhame, and giving our beings a wound in their moſt eſſential and

ſenſible

ſenſible part. The experience we have of the operations of the former, is an argument of our imperfection, and meanneſs, and low rank. The other prevails moſt in the higher ranks of beings. It is the chief glory of God, that he is removed infinitely from the poſſibility of any other principle of action.

It being therefore apparent that the determination of our minds concerning the nature of actions as morally good or bad, ſuggeſts a motive to do or avoid them; it being alſo plain that this determination or judgment, though often not the prevailing, yet is always the firſt, the proper, and moſt natural and intimate ſpring and guide of the actions of reaſonable beings: Let us now enquire, whether it be not further the *only* ſpring of action in a reaſonable being, as far as he can be deemed morally good and worthy; whether it be not the *only* principle from which all actions flow which engage our eſteem of the agents; or, in other words, whether virtue be not itſelf the end of a virtuous agent as ſuch.

If we conſider that alone as moſt properly *done* by an agent, which he *deſigns* to do, and

and that what was no way an object of his design is not strictly imputable to him, or at least cannot give him any claim to merit or praise, it will follow that he cannot be properly said to practise virtue who does not *design* to practise it, to whom it is no object of regard, or who has it not at all in his view. It seems indeed as evident as we can wish any thing to be, that an action which is under no influence or direction from a *moral judgment*, cannot be in the practical sense *moral*; that when virtue is not pursued or intended, there is no virtue in the agent. Morally good intention, without any idea of moral good, is a contradiction. To act virtuously is to obey or follow reason: But can this be done without knowing and designing it?

I know, indeed, that according to the account some have given of virtue, it presupposes an intention in the agent different from that to itself, because, according to this account, it denotes only the emotion arising in us upon observing actions flowing from certain motives and affections, and, in the original constitution of natures, is applicable alike to actions flowing from *any* motives. Were this account true, it would be

be a groſs fallacy to ſuppoſe that a ſenſe of virtue and duty, or any regard to moral good, can ever influence to action. But this conſequence cannot be regarded by one who believes not the opinion which implies it; nor is it with me a ſmall objection to this opinion, that ſuch a conſequence ariſes from it.

If a perſon can juſtly be ſtyled *virtuous* and *praiſe worthy*, when he never reflects upon virtue, and the reaſon of his acting is not taken from any conſideration of it, intelligence certainly is not neceſſary to moral agency, and brutes are full as capable of virtue and moral merit as we are.—Beſides, might not a perſon with equal reaſon be reckoned *publick ſpirited*, who without any view to publick good, ſhould accidentally make a diſcovery that enriches his country? May not that courſe of behaviour be as well ſtyled *ambitious*, to which the love of honour and power did not excite; or that *ſelfiſh*, which did not aim at private intereſt; or that *friendly*, which was attended with no friendly intention *?

I have

* Εστι γαρ αυτη ἡ ευπραξεια τελος. *Ariſt.* Ethic. Lib. vi. Chap. v.—αιδι κατ' αρετην πραξεις καλαι, και τε καλε ἑνεκα—

ὁ δε

I have the pleaſure to find the author of the *Characteriſticks* agreeing with me in theſe ſentiments. " In this caſe alone, ſays he, " it is we call any creature worthy or vir- " tuous, when it can have the notion of a " publick intereſt, and can attain to the ſpe- " culation or ſenſe of what is morally good " or ill, admirable or blameable, right or " wrong. For though we may vulgarly " call an ill horſe vicious, yet we never ſay " of a good one, nor of any mere ideot or " changeling, though ever ſo good natured, " that he is worthy or virtuous. So that " if a creature be generous, kind, conſtant, " and compaſſionate, yet if he cannot re- " flect on what he himſelf does or ſees " others do, ſo as to take notice of what is " worthy and honeſt, and to make that no- " tice or conception of worth and honeſty " to be an object of his affection, he has " not the character of being virtuous; for " thus and no otherwiſe he is capable of " having a ſenſe of right or wrong, &c."

ὁ δε διδους εις μη δει, ἡ μη τε καλε ἑιεκα, αλλα δια τινα αλλην αιτιαν, ουκ ελευθεριος, αλλα αλλος τις ρηθησεται. Ibid. Lib. iv. Chap. 1. And to the ſame purpoſe in many other places.

See the *Enquiry*, Part II. Sect III. And elsewhere he observes that, "if that which restrains a person and holds him to a virtuous-like behaviour be no affection "towards virtue or goodness itself, but "towards private good merely, he is not "in reality the more virtuous." Ibid. Sect. IV *.

But

* "Others may pursue different forms and fix their "eyes on different species, as all men do on one or other; "the real honest man, however plain he appears, has "that highest species, honesty itself in view." *Charact.* Vol. III. page 34. *See also* page 66. "But as soon "as he comes to have affection towards what is morally good, and can like or affect such good for its "own sake, as good and amiable in itself, then is he "in some degree good and virtuous, and not till then." —This truly noble author has no where expressed clearly and distinctly his sentiments concerning the original of our ideas of virtue; but from some expressions he has used, it seems probable that he was for a surer and deeper foundation of morals, than either arbitrary will or implanted senses. *See* Vol. II. pages 36, 43, 49, 50, 53, 257.—Vol. III. page 33.—His account of virtue in his *Enquiry*, is, indeed, on several accounts extremely deficient, particularly on account of his limiting virtue so much as in general he seems to do, to the cultivation of natural affection and benevolence; and overlooking entirely, as Dr. *Butler* observes, the *authority* belonging to virtue and the principle of reflexion. Yet he has, I think, made many excellent observations

But it may be aſked, "is not *Benevolence* "a virtuous principle? And do we not "approve all actions proceeding from it?" —I anſwer, Benevolence, it has been ſhewn, is of two kinds, *rational* and *inſtinctive*. *Rational benevolence* entirely coincides with rectitude, and the actions proceeding from it, with the actions proceeding from a regard to rectitude. And the ſame is to be ſaid of all thoſe affections and deſires, which would ariſe in a nature as intelligent. It is not poſſible that endeavours to obtain an end which, as reaſonable, we cannot but love and chuſe, ſhould not be by reaſon approved; or that what is *neceſſarily deſirable* to all beings, ſhould not be alſo *neceſſarily right to be purſued*.

But *inſtinctive benevolence* is no principle of virtue, nor are any actions flowing merely from it virtuous. As far as this influences, ſo far ſomething elſe than reaſon and goodneſs influence, and ſo much I think is to be ſubtracted from the moral worth of any action

obſervations on virtue and providence, on life and manners; nor can it be enough lamented, that his prejudices againſt Chriſtianity have contributed ſo much towards defeating the good effects of them, and ſtaining his works.

or character. This obſervation agrees perfectly with the common ſentiments and determinations of mankind. Wherever the influence of mere natural temper or inclination appears, and a particular conduct is known to proceed from hence, we may, it is true, love the perſon, as we commonly do the inferior creatures when they diſcover mildneſs and tractableneſs of diſpoſition; but no regard to him as a *virtuous* agent will ariſe within us. A ſoft and ſilly man, let him be ever ſo complying, liberal, and good-tempered, never ſtands high in our eſteem; becauſe we always apprehend him to be what he is, not ſo much from any influence of reaſon and moral good, as from a happy inſtinct and bent of nature born with him: And, in the ſame manner, the tenderneſs of parents for their offspring, a fond mother's expoſing her life to ſave her child, and all actions proceeding from the nearer attachments of nature appear to have as much leſs moral value, as they are derived more from natural inſtinct, and leſs attended with reflexion on their reaſonableneſs and fitneſs. As long as this reflexion is wanting, it is in a moral account indifferent, whether the action proceeds from kind affection or any other

other affection.—But it muſt not be forgot, that ſuch reflexion will, in general, accompany friendly and benevolent actions, and cannot but have ſome concern in producing them. Approbation is inſeparable from the view of them, and ſome ideas of right and wrong are preſent always with all men, and muſt more or leſs influence almoſt all they do. We have an unavoidable conſciouſneſs of *rectitude* in relieving miſery, in promoting happineſs, and in every office of love and good-will to others. It is this *conſecrates* kindneſs and humanity, and exalts them into virtues.

Actions proceeding from univerſal, calm, and diſpaſſionate benevolence, are by all eſteemed more virtuous and amiable than actions producing equal or greater moments of good, directed to thoſe to whom nature has more particularly linked us, and ariſing from kind determinations in our minds which are more confined and urgent. The reaſon is, that in the former caſe the operations of inſtinct have leſs effect, and are leſs ſenſible, and the attention to what is morally good and right is more explicit and prevalent. Were we prompted to the acts of univerſal benevolence in the ſame

manner that parents are to the care of their children, we ſhould not conceive of them as more virtuous. Theſe facts cannot be explained conſiſtently with the notion, that virtue conſiſts in acting from kind affections which cannot be derived from intelligence, and are incapable, in their immediate exerciſe, of being attended with any influence from it. For why then ſhould not the virtue be greateſt where the kind impulſe is ſtrongeſt? Why ſhould it, on the contrary, in ſuch a caſe, be leaſt of all, and entirely vaniſh, when all uſe of reaſon is precluded, and nothing but the force of inſtinct appears? Why, in particular, ſhould reſiſting our ſtrongeſt inſtincts, and following ſteadily in contradiction to them *, the determinations of cool unbiaſſed reaſon, be conſidered as the very higheſt virtue? Probably, thoſe who plead for this opinion would give it up, and acknowledge what is now aſſerted, could they be convinced that benevolence is eſſential to intelligence, and not merely an implanted principle or inſtinct.

All

* More to this purpoſe has been ſaid by Mr. *Balguy*, in his *Tract on the Foundation of Moral Goodneſs*.

All theſe obſervations may very juſtly be applied to ſelf-love. *Reaſonable and calm* ſelf-love, as well as the *love of mankind*, is entirely a virtuous principle. They are both parts of the idea of virtue. Where this is greateſt, there will be the moſt ardent and active benevolence, and likewiſe the greateſt degree of true prudence, the higheſt concern about bettering ourſelves to the utmoſt, and the moſt effectual and conſtant purſuit of private happineſs and perfection, in oppoſition to whatever hindrances and temptations to neglect them may be thrown in our way.

Our natural deſires carrying us to private good are very ſtrong, and the purſuit of it is more likely to ariſe from theſe deſires without any rational reflexion, or interpoſition of moral judgment, than the purſuit of publick good; which is one reaſon why it is leſs conſidered as virtue. Avoiding a *preſent* danger or ſecuring a *preſent* good to ourſelves, is not often looked upon as in any degree virtuous: but the ſame cannot be ſaid of endeavouring to prevent a *future* danger, or to ſecure a *future* good: The reaſon of which is, that we are drawn towards what is *preſent* with a greater degree

of inſtinctive deſire *. It makes more ſenſible impreſſions upon us, and ſtrikes our minds more forcibly. Yet, in ſome circumſtances of oppoſition from particular paſſions

* This is a very wiſe and neceſſary diſpoſition of our natures. Had we the ſame ſenſible determination to *diſtant* good that we have to *preſent*, how diſtracted ſhould we be in our purſuits? How regardleſs of what is preſent, how impatient, how miſerable would it render us?—The conſequence, on the other hand, of giving us a greater propenſity to preſent than future good, muſt be the danger of chuſing and reſting in the one to the neglect of the other. This inconvenience, however, (which it is the buſineſs of reaſon and a principal part of virtue to prevent) is far from being equal to the contrary inconveniencies which would have attended a different conſtitution of our natures.—It may ſeem upon a general reflexion very ſtrange, that perſons, when acting ſolely from a regard to private good, ſhould be capable of knowingly chuſing a leſs rather than a greater, a preſent rather than a future much more important good. If we were on ſuch occaſions determined by nothing but the ſimple and calm view of good as ſuch, this fact would indeed be entirely unaccountable. But when we attend to the obſervation now made, and conſider that we have a ſtronger inſtinctive determination to preſent than to future good, the difficulty in a great meaſure vaniſhes. The fact I have mentioned will not be more unaccountable than a man's following his paſſions and inſtincts

ſions and competition between different pleaſures, acting from a regard even to *preſent* good may be really virtuous. And, always, the more remote a good is, and the more temptations we have to forego our own intereſt, the greater is our virtue in maintaining a proper regard to it. In theſe caſes, reaſon is neceſſarily more called forth to interpoſe and decide; our paſſions concur leſs with its dictates; and our determinations are more derived from its authority. Some kinds of future good there are, the purſuit of which *always* proves virtue. Others are ſo agreeable to the lower parts of our natures, and ſo connected with ſtrong inſtinctive deſires, that actions

inſtincts in any other inſtances, in oppoſition to his own happineſs, and all the reaſons that can be propoſed to him.—In other words; we have a *particular tendency or appetite* to *preſent good*, from whence it happens, that good is far from always affecting and influencing us, in proportion to the apprehended degree of its abſolute worth. The view of *preſent good*, therefore, getting the better of the calm and diſpaſſionate views of our *greateſt intereſt upon the whole*, is only one inſtance of what happens continually in the world, namely, "blind "deſire, unintelligent inclination or brute impulſe, "getting the better of motives and conſiderations, "known by the mind to be of incomparably greater "weight."

actions produced by the view of them can argue little or no virtue, though reaſon ſhould approve the choice of them. But when reaſon condemns any particular gratifications; when pleaſures of a baſer nature ſtand in competition with thoſe of a higher nature; or when, upon any account, pleaſures in themſelves innocent are proper to be reſigned; in theſe caſes, guilt and blame become the conſequences of purſuing them.

From hence we may ſee plainly, how far hope and fear may be virtuous principles; and why, for inſtance, though doing an action to eſcape an ignominous death, or to obtain a profitable place, be not virtue; yet it is virtue, in many inſtances, to refrain from gratifications which we know are hurtful to us, or to quit a courſe of debauchery to which paſſion and habit ſtrongly urge us, from an apprehenſion of its bad effects on our healths and fortunes.

Theſe obſervations (to which might be added many more of the ſame kind) are all very evident proofs of the truth of the concluſion I would eſtabliſh; namely, "that "the virtue of an agent is always *leſs* in "propor-

" proportion to the degree in which natural
" temper and propenſities fall in with his
" actions, inſtinctive principles operate,
" and rational reflexion on what is right to
" be done, is wanting."

It is further worth our particular notice, that the obſervations which have been now made on ſelf-love, and the actions flowing from it, ſhew us plainly how far a conduct founded on religious principles, and influenced by the conſideration of the rewards and puniſhment to follow virtue and vice in another ſtate, can be juſtly repreſented as deſtitute of moral goodneſs. It is indeed ſurprizing, that extending our care to the *whole* of our exiſtence, acting with a view to the final welfare of our natures, and elevating our minds above temporal objects out of a regard to a bleſſed immortality; it is, I ſay, ſurpriſing, that ſuch conduct ſhould have been ever in any degree depreciated. If any thing gives dignity of character, and raiſes one man above another, this does. If any thing is virtue, this is. Eſpecially; as the very reward expected is itſelf virtue; the higheſt degrees of moral improvement; a near reſemblance to God; opportunities

for

for the moſt extenſive beneficence, and admiſſion into a ſtate into which nothing that defileth can enter, and the love and hope of which imply the love of goodneſs.—In a word; if in all caſes, a reaſonable and ſteady purſuit of private happineſs amidſt temptations to forego it from paſſion and preſent gratifications, be virtuous; how eaſy is it to determine what opinion we ought to entertain of the purſuit of *ſuch* a happineſs as virtuous men are taught to expect in another world?

Let me add, on this occaſion, that the firm belief of future rewards is in the greateſt degree advantageous to virtue, as it raiſes our ideas of its dignity by ſhewing us the Deity engaged in its favour, and as it takes off every obſtacle to the practice of it ariſing from ſelf-love, ſets us at liberty to follow the good inclinations of our hearts, gives all good affections within us room to exert themſelves, and engages us, by an additional motive of the greateſt weight, to cultivate them as much as poſſible; and thus, by occaſioning a courſe of external actions flowing from them, gradually ſtrengthens and exalts them, and fixes, confirms, and cheriſhes

riſhes the habit and love of virtue in the mind.

But to return to the main purpoſe of this chapter.—What has been ſaid of virtuous actions may eaſily be applied to vicious actions. Theſe can be no farther *in the agent* vicious, than he knew or might have known them to be ſo. The wrong can be no farther chargeable upon *him*, than he *ſaw* it, and acted in oppoſition to his *ſenſe* of it. Or, to ſpeak agreeably to a foregoing obſervation, and perhaps more properly, the *viciouſneſs* in an action is no farther the agent's, than the *vicious* action is his; and no more of the vicious action is his, than was included in his intention.

When it appears, that a perſon had no ſuſpicion of wrong in an action performed by him, and that he would certainly not have done it, had he entertained ſuch a ſuſpicion, nothing can be more unjuſt than to charge him, in this particular, with guilt and ill-deſert. His being thus unſuſpicious, it is true, may be the effect of criminal error and careleſſneſs; but then in *theſe* lies the guilt, and not in the conſequent actions themſelves which are performed with the

apprehenſion

apprehenſion that they are innocent. Every ſingle action of a being has in it ſome preciſe and fixed degree of guilt, innocence or virtue, which is entirely determined by his perceptions, views, and ſtate of mind at the time of doing it, and cannot be rendered greater or leſs by what went before it, or what comes after it. What has been once true of an event, muſt always remain true of it. What is at the time of performance, the real determinate character of an action, in reſpect of commendableneſs or blameableneſs, muſt for ever remain its character without increaſe or diminution.—The pernicious conſequences ariſing from an action aggravate its guilt, only ſo far as the agent, when he did it, foreſaw or ſuſpected them, or had ſome conſciouſneſs that he ought to have taken greater care, and conſidered better, what might prove the effects of his conduct. A ſeries of evil actions may alſo be the occaſion of other evil actions, which when only *materially* evil, may indeed often be a very ſevere puniſhment of former wickedneſs, but cannot increaſe the agent's guilt, or ſubject to further puniſhment. This can be the conſequence only, when ſuch actions are themſelves criminal, or inſtances of the violation

violation of conſcience and repetitions of former wickedneſs. If we are to lay it down for true, that one faulty ſtep may taint all the actions to which it may unhappily have been the introduction, whatever our *preſent* ſenſe of them may be; or, that conſequences ariſing from actions which we did not foreſee, render them criminal; how deplorable is our condition? For who can ever know all the effects that will reſult from his actions? or be ſure, in many inſtances, when acting upon particular opinions, that throughout the whole progreſs of his thoughts in forming them, he was under no influence from any undue biaſs *?

Let

* It might have been further worth remarking here, that *true* opinions are often the effects of guilt as well as *falſe* ones, and that when they are ſo, they are no leſs culpable, and muſt have the ſame effects on the imputable nature of the actions occaſioned by them.—This, by the way, ſhould be more conſidered by us, when we juſtify our cenſures of others for their errors, by ſaying, they proceed from criminal diſpoſitions and prejudices. For we ourſelves, however right our opinions may be, are equally blameable on their account, as far as they are owing to the like criminal diſpoſitions, or proceed from pride, implicitneſs, negligence, or any other wrong cauſes.

Let it not be imagined that what has been now aſſerted, has a tendency to render men negligent in their enquiries. Though a crazy or drunken man may not be *immediately* blameable in doing many actions in themſelves very evil, yet for a man to put himſelf into a ſtate in which he knows he ſhall be liable to do ſuch actions, is extremely wicked. The difference is not great, between doing what we foreſee may cauſe us to do an evil blindly and unknowingly, and doing the evil deliberately.

This ſhews us, how inexcuſable all *voluntary* ignorance is, and of how great importance it is, that we avoid all unfairneſs in forming our ſentiments. No upright perſon can be indifferent about this. We have not indeed on any occaſion more ſcope for virtue, or better opportunities for exerciſing ſome of the nobleſt diſpoſitions of mind, than when employed in enquiring after truth and duty: and, conſidering the diſmal evils which may ariſe from diſhoneſty here; how ſad it is to have the light that is in us darkneſs, and to what mazes of error, ſuperſtition and deſtructive conduct, a miſguided judgment may lead us; we cannot be too diligent in labouring rightly to inform

form our conſciences; or too anxious about obtaining juſt apprehenſions, and freeing ourſelves from the power of whatever prejudices or paſſions tend to warp our minds, and are inconſiſtent with that coolneſs, candour, and impartiality which are indiſpenſibly neceſſary qualifications in one who would diſcover what is *true* and *right*.

Thus have I given what I think the true account of the nature and requiſites of *practical virtue*. I obſerved firſt of all, that it requires liberty and intelligence. But what I have chiefly inſiſted on, is, that we characterize as *virtuous* no actions flowing merely from inſtinctive deſires, or from any principle except a regard to *virtue itſelf*. This, I have endeavoured to prove, to be the object of the ſupreme affection and the ultimate end of a *virtuous* * agent *as ſuch*.—Virtue, if I have argued right, muſt be deſired, loved, and practiſed on its own account

* This, in reality, is but little more than maintaining what cannot poſſibly be denied, that it ought to be the firſt care of every reaſonable being to do all that he thinks to be right, and to abſtain from all that he thinks to be wrong; or, that reaſon, as it is the *principal*, ought to be the *leading* and *governing faculty*, in every reaſonable being.

count *. Nothing is any exercise of it, but what proceeds from an inward relish for it and regard to it, for its own sake.—It has also, I hope, been sufficiently explained, how benevolence and self-love, and the actions to which they excite us, as far as morally good and praise-worthy, are derived from this source. Nothing would be more unreasonable than for any one further to urge, that a regard to the divine will is a principle of virtuous conduct, not reducible to

* "From the distinction between self-love, and the "several particular principles or affections in our na- "ture, we may see how good ground there was for "the assertion maintained by the several ancient schools "of philosophy, against the *Epicureans*, namely, that "virtue is to be pursued as an end eligible in and for "itself. For if there be any principles or affections "in the mind of man distinct from self-love; that the "things the principles tend towards, or that the ob- "jects of these affections are each of them in them- "selves eligible, to be pursued on its own account, "and to be rested in as an end, is implied in the very "idea of such principle or affection. They, indeed, "asserted much higher things of virtue, and with very "good reason; but to say thus much of it, that it is to "be pursued for itself, is to say no more of it than may "be truly said of the object of every natural affection "whatsoever." Preface to Dr. *Butler*'s Sermons, p. 32.

to that I have inſiſted on. Is it not from a ſenſe of duty that virtuous agents obey the will of God? What merit would there be in obeying it, out of a blind awe or ſervile dread, unaccompanied with any knowledge of it as *fit* and *becoming?* The true ground then of moral merit in this caſe, is evidently the influence of moral diſcernment. Here, as in all other inſtances, "the ultimate "ſpring of virtuous practice in reaſonable "beings, is the reaſonable faculty itſelf, "the *conſideration of duty*, or the *perception "of right*."

CHAP. IX.

Of the different Degrees of Virtue and Vice, and the Methods of eſtimating them. Of difficulties attending the Practice of Virtue, the Uſe of Trial in forming reaſonable Beings to Virtue, and the Eſſentials of a good and bad Character.

THROUGHOUT the whole of this Treatiſe, until the laſt chapter, I had conſidered virtue more generally and abſtractly; its nature, foundation, obligation, and principal diviſions. I have, in that chapter, conſidered it more particularly in its reference to actual practice, and the capacities and wills of moral agents; and I am now to proceed in thus conſidering it, and to explain the various *degrees* of it in different

different actions and characters, and to shew how we compute them; how far the temper should be formed by it; and what relation the faculty that perceives it bears to our other powers.

It is, as shewn in the last chapter, the reflexion on the *fitness* of an action and the *right of the case*, that constitutes us *virtuous* and *rewardable*. It is the intention to practise virtue, and the influence which a regard to it has upon our resolutions, that renders us objects of moral praise and esteem. And the greater this influence is, the greater must we account the virtue, and the more must we admire the action. Hence then, "the *degree* "of regard or disregard, of attachment or "the want of attachment to truth and "rectitude evidenced by actions, is what de- "termines the judgment we make of the "*degree* of moral good and evil in them." *External actions* are to be considered as signs of the motives and views of agents. We can, in general, infer the latter from the former with sufficient certainty. But when this happens to be impracticable, we are rendered incapable of forming any judgment of the merit or demerit of actions.

The rule I have now laid down, will be ſufficiently proved, by attending to the following facts.

Doing a good action which we have few or ſmall temptations to omit, has little virtue in it; for the regard to virtue muſt indeed be very low in that being, who will not be engaged by it to do a good action, which will coſt him but little trouble and expence, and thwarts not ſenſibly any of his natural deſires.—When ſecular intereſt, love of fame, curioſity, reſentment, or any of our particular propenſions conſpire with virtue in exciting to an action, it is in the ſame proportion virtuous as the apprehenſion of its rectitude influenced to it, which can never be accounted much, when the action is known to fall in with the bent and humour of our minds and the current of our paſſions.—When difficulties occur, and ſecular intereſt, humour, vanity, or any of our inferior powers claſh with virtue, the degree of it is in proportion to the difficulties ſurmounted, or the number and violence of the paſſions it overcomes.—When all or ſeveral of the different ſpecies of virtue unite in engaging to one and the ſame action,

action, doing it, in theſe circumſtances, argues leſs virtue than if it had been done from the conſideration of one of them ſingly. Thus; any given right action attended with given difficulties, and performed with equal effect, and flowing merely from gratitude, is more virtuous, than if alſo a regard to publick and private intereſt, to juſtice and to veracity had required it, and concurred in producing it. Hence, therefore, the virtue muſt be *greateſt* when any ſingle ſpecies of it, when every view of what is decent and fit, every deciſion of our practical judgments, is ſufficient to determine us in oppoſition to *all* temptations; when we are ready to follow *where-ever* virtue leads us, and poſſeſs ſuch a moral ſenſibility as to ſhrink from every *appearance* of wrong, and ſuch a horror at guilt as to dread all the *approaches* to it.

With reſpect to vicious actions, we may obſerve in general, that the ſame circumſtances which *diminiſh* the virtue of any action, *increaſe* the vice in omiting it, and *vice verſa*. The commiſſion of an evil to which we have little temptation, though there can be but little virtue in abſtaining

from it, is yet always very criminal; for it ſhews very great weakneſs of the moral principle.—When an action is not at all reflected upon as evil, there can be no diſregard to virtue ſhewn, and therefore no guilt contracted.—When an action is reflected upon as evil, but the motives to commit it are very ſtrong and urgent, the guilt attending the commiſſion of it is diminiſhed, and all that can be inferred is, not the *abſolute*, but the *comparative* weakneſs of the virtuous principle, or its inferiority in ſtrength to ſome other principles.—The more deliberately any wrong action is done, the more wicked it appears to us; becauſe, in this caſe, reaſon and conſcience have time to gather their whole force, and exert their utmoſt ſtrength; but nevertheleſs are conquered. For this reaſon, a ſingle act of vice, when thus deliberate and wilful, may be the ſtrongeſt proof of a bad moral ſtate, and a ſufficient indication of the whole moral character; which cannot be ſaid of any faults of ſurprize, to which the violence of ſudden paſſions may ſometimes hurry men. —In a word; the greater the evil itſelf is that a man commits; the more it contradicts,

not

not only his ideas of rectitude, but his inſtinctive deſires; the greater number of the different kinds of moral obligation it violates; the clearer his perception is of wrong in it; the longer his time for reflexion is, and the leſs the number and ſtrength of his temptations are; the greater vice is he chargeable with, and the more flagrant is his guilt. On the other hand, it is evident, that by increaſing the number and ſtrength of temptations, and leſſening the time for reflexion and the ſenſe of wrong, the degree of guilt in an evil action will be diminiſhed; and it may by ſuch cauſes be reduced ſo low, that all diſapprobation of the agent ſhall vaniſh.

From theſe obſervations we may draw the following inferences.

Firſt, The difficulties ſurmounted enhancing the virtue of the character, no otherwiſe than as they evidence a ſtricter attachment to righteouſneſs and more influence of the virtuous principle; it is plain, that they can by no means be *eſſential* to virtue. As long as the degree of virtuous attachment is the ſame, it matters not whether

ther or no any oppoſition is ſubdued: The character remains equally worthy. The man who, in a courſe of goodneſs, meets with leſs hindrance than another from his paſſions and temper, may be equally virtuous, if he has in him that affection to goodneſs, which would engage him, if he had the ſame opportunities and trials with another, equally to maſter the ſame hindrances. Difficulties and inconveniencies attending virtue are the means of ſhewing to others, who cannot ſee immediately into our hearts, what is in us, and what our moral temper is. And they have alſo the following effects upon ourſelves. They awaken our attention to righteouſneſs and goodneſs; they call forth the moral principle to exert itſelf in a manner not otherwiſe poſſible, and thus become the means of producing ſtronger virtuous effects, and of encreaſing the force and dominion of reaſon within us, and of improving and confirming virtuous habits *.

—Theſe

* If ſurmounting of difficulties, or ſubduing oppoſition, is not what properly *conſtitutes* the virtue of an agent, it follows, that neither is it what conſtitutes his *merit* or *rewardableneſs*; any further than as it may be the means of *improving* his virtue, and, at the ſame time, of diminiſhing the *preſent* happineſs attending it.

—Theſe are the uſes of the difficulties and temptations attending virtuous practice; but then it muſt be acknowledged that, in ſome reſpects, they are likewiſe the cauſes of very great evils. If they are the means of *improving* virtue, they are alſo the means of *overwhelming* and *ruining* it. If they give riſe to moral diſcipline, they likewiſe obſtruct it; they produce moral depravity, and occaſion all the corruptions and vices of the world. It would be foreign to my preſent purpoſe to enter into an explanation of this fact. I cannot however omit digreſſing ſo far as to obſerve, that we cannot certainly ſay, how far the evils I have mentioned, might have been prevented among beings like ourſelves, growing up gradually to the uſe of reaſon, and, in the mean time, under a neceſſity of acquiring ſome habits or other, and of being guided by inſtinctive principles? Can virtue be *diſciplined* and *tried* without be *endangered?* or *endangered* without being ſometimes *loſt?* Can we acquire any ſecurity or confirmation in virtue, till we are habituated to it? And before the habit is acquired, and in the dawn of reaſon, muſt there not be the hazard of degenerating?

It

It may, indeed, be ſaid, that an order of beings may be ſo made, and, in the beginning of their beings, ſo circumſtanced, that, while they are advancing towards maturity of reaſon, and acquiring ſufficient views of the nature and excellence of virtue to keep them ſteady in the practice of it, their inclinations and deſires ſhall always coincide with their duty, and no habits be liable to be contracted which are unfavourable to it; And this, for aught I know, may be poſſible; and, for this reaſon and many others, it muſt be owned, that the preſent ſtate of mankind has a great deal in it, which we are not capable of accounting for. It would in truth be very ſtrange if it had not, or if any object in nature had not, conſidering our ſtation and ſtanding in the univerſe and the ſhortneſs of our views.—But, be this as it will, it cannot be improper to obſerve, that, as the natures and circumſtances of men now are, had their deſires and their duty always coincided, we might, after much time ſpent in a practice *objectively* virtuous, been ſo little eſtabliſhed in *true* virtue, and the moral principle might, all the while, have lain ſo dormant, that, upon a change in our ſituation, the

the ſlighteſt temptation might have led us aſtray. But difficulties attending the diſcharge of our duty, and particular deſires drawing us contrary to it, have a tendency, by obliging us to a more anxious, attentive, and conſtant exerciſe of virtue, in a peculiar manner, to accelerate our progreſs in it and eſtabliſh our regard to it. And though, at firſt, the virtuous principle may be ſcarcely able to turn the balance in its own favour, or but juſt prevail; yet every repeated inſtance, in which the inward ſpring of virtue thus exerts its utmoſt force, and overcomes oppoſition, gives new power to it *: And it has often actually happened, that virtuous men by a courſe of virtuous ſtruggles and long practice of ſelf-denial, by being accuſtomed to repel temptations, to reſtrain appetite and to contemn ſufferings, when not to be avoided with innocence, have gradually ſo ſtrengthened the virtuous principle and eſtabliſhed the ſovereignty of conſcience in themſelves, that difficulties have in a manner vaniſhed; and virtue

* See the Chapter on *Moral Government in Butler's Analogy.*

tue has become eaſy and delightful. And let it be well minded, that though this is the period in which the difficulties of ſuch perſons are *leaſt*, yet it is alſo the period in which their virtue is *greateſt*. The truth therefore is, that the difficulties a virtuous agent meets with prove, in general, only the *defects* of his virtue. Had he a ſufficient degree of virtue, he could meet with *no* difficulties; and the more of it he poſſeſſes, the leſs effect has any given degree of temptation in turning him aſide from it, or diſturbing his reſolutions; the more maſter he is of every inclination within him; the leſs reluctance he feels in the diſcharge of his duty, and with the more pleaſure and ardor he adheres to it.

How unreaſonable then is it to affirm, that human virtue exceeds that of angels, becauſe of the oppoſition it encounters; or to regard it as a queſtion of difficulty, whether the excellence of the moral character of the Deity would not be encreaſed, if he had within him ſome diſpoſitions contrary to goodneſs?—Can the very circumſtances which argue *imperfection in virtue*, add to the *merit* of it? As much ſuperior

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as is the virtue of angels, ſo much the leſs capable muſt it be of being endangered by any difficulties, or at all affected by cauſes which would put an entire end to ours. As much higher as their reaſon is and more perfect their natures, ſo much the leſs muſt every thing weigh with them, when ſet in oppoſition to virtue; ſo much the more ſenſible they muſt be, that nothing is of conſequence, nothing worth wiſhing for, when compared with virtue, or when not to be obtained without violating it.—With reſpect to the Deity particularly; ſuch is the perfection of his nature, and ſuch his diſcernment of the nature, glory and obligation of the eternal laws of righteouſneſs *, that nothing whatſoever can come in competition with them, or have any tendency to draw him aſide from them.

* The manner of ſpeaking here uſed concerning the Deity is ſuitable to our common ways of conceiving of his perfections; but it is by no means ſtrictly proper. It is generally indeed ſcarce poſſible to ſpeak otherwiſe than improperly of him. He that approves the ſentiments on this ſubject, which have been delivered in the fifth chapter, (and which will be more fully explained in the Diſſertation at the end of this Treatiſe) may eaſily correct by them all ſuch forms of expreſſion, whenever they occur.

them. His moral excellence consists in such a degree of purity or holiness, as renders him incapable of being *tempted* to evil, and raises him infinitely above all possibility of a bias to deviate from what is right. To suppose such a bias in him, is to suppose him of finite and derived wisdom and goodness. If he prevails over it, but only in a limited degree, or so that some backwardness is left, it will follow, that he is not *completely* good *. If he prevails over it infinitely or perfectly, so that no reluctance remains and no proportion exists between its influence and the influence of moral rectitude; this will be the same as to have no such bias, or to meet with no opposition. So apparent is it, that the supposition of difficulties

* What is here said, may be illustrated by substituting *power* in the room of *virtue*, and comparing the opposition the latter may meet with, to that which the former may meet with, in producing any particular effects. The *power* of a being is the same, whether it meets with any opposition or not. The difficulties it finds, in overcoming opposition, prove in general only its weakness: The greater the power is, the less difficulty it must find in producing any given effect; and, when supposed infinite, as in the Deity, the very notion of difficulty and opposition becomes a contradiction.

ties attending the perfect goodneſs of the Deity (or of diſpoſitions in him contrary to rectitude) by which it may at firſt ſight ſeem, that his moral perfection would be increaſed, overthrows it.—But, in truth, we know not what we ſay, when we talk in this manner, or make ſuppoſitions of this ſort. In a neceſſary and ſimple nature there can be no jarring principles. It is ſuppoſing a contradiction to ſuppoſe, that a being, who is *pure*, *original*, *infinite reaſon*, can poſſeſs any tendencies *repugnant to reaſon*, or any that do not coincide with it, and reſolve themſelves into it.

From theſe obſervations alſo it appears, that what has been ſaid of the extenuation of guilt by the ſtrength of temptations, muſt be underſtood with ſome reſtrictions. For that temptations are *ſtrong*, may argue nothing more, than that our power of reſiſtance is *weak*; that the ſpring of virtue (the contrary force in our minds which ſhould repel them) is relaxed or broken. How wretched an excuſe then for vice is this, as it is frequently pleaded? To what do temptations commonly owe their ſtrength, but to ſtrong evil habits the guilty perſon has

contracted, and the low and languiſhing ſtate of his moral powers? And how abſurd is it to make the want of virtue a plea for the want of virtue, and to juſtify guilt by guilt? —However, though the idea affixed to the term *great*, when applied to temptations, like the ſame idea when applied to bodies, be wholly relative, or the reſult of a compariſon between our moral and our other principles; yet there are undoubtedly different degrees of temptation, and ſome conceivable by us, for which no human virtue could be a match. And though our liableneſs to be overcome by *any* temptations, ariſes from the imperfection of human virtue; yet, as all temptations are far from equal, being overcome by ſome of them may argue far leſs defect of virtue, than being overcome by others; which is all that is meant by their extenuating guilt. No one, for inſtance, will ſay, that a crime committed through fear of immediate tortures and death, implies equal guilt with the ſame crime committed to avoid a ſlight inconvenience.

Secondly, We may remark, that what has been ſaid on the ſubject of the preſent enquiry,

quiry, has little or no relation to the queſtion, whether there are any different degrees of *objective* right and wrong in actions, and determines nothing concerning it. Though there were no different degrees of right and wrong in this ſenſe; though theſe characters were ſuppoſed to be abſolute and complete, or not at all, in every ſingle object to which they are applied; there would ſtill be the ſame room left for an infinite variety of degrees of virtue and vice, of merit and guilt *in agents*; and alſo in *actions*, conſidered, not in their *abſolute* and *abſtract* ſenſe, but *relatively* to the intentions and views of reaſonable beings, or as *ſigns* and *effects* of their regard to *abſolute virtue* *. It is thus moſt commonly we conſider actions, and this is the true ſource and meaning of the different degrees of commendation and

 blame,

* This diſtinction has, I believe, been greatly overlooked in the diſpute I have here in view. An ingenious writer, in proving the inequality of good and bad actions, in oppoſition to the *Stoicks*, plainly means their inequality in this laſt ſenſe; and, one would think, the *Stoicks* could never mean ſeriouſly to aſſert their equality in any other, than the former of theſe ſenſes. See Mr. *Grove's Syſtem of Moral Philoſophy*, p. 262, &c. Vol. I. See alſo *Cic.* Parad.

blame, of praiſe and cenſure we beſtow upon them, and of the various appellations and phraſes by which theſe are ſignified. And though, ſometimes, we ſpeak of actions as being, in the former ſenſe, more or leſs right or wrong; this, perhaps, is to be underſtood in much the ſame manner with the greater or *leſs ratio's* of mathematicians, or with the different degrees of equality and inequality in quantities.

Thirdly, It may be worth obſerving, how very deficient Dr. *Hutcheſon*'s manner of computing the morality of actions is *. For this purpoſe he gives us this general Canon. "The virtue is as the moment of good pro-" duced, diminiſhed or increaſed, by the " private intereſt concurring with or oppoſ-" ing it, divided by the ability." This plainly takes for granted, as all his ſubſequent rules likewiſe do, that benevolence is the whole of virtue; and that no action directed merely to private happineſs, or by which any thing is intended, beſides ſome over-

* Vid. *Enquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil*, Sect. 3. Art. 11. and Sect. 7. Art. 9.

overbalance of public good, can be, in any degree, virtuous. How very maimed ſuch an idea of virtue is, I have endeavoured to ſhew. Some of the nobleſt acts of virtue and worſt acts of wickedneſs, may be thoſe which have only ourſelves, or the Deity, for their objects; and many relating to our fellow-creatures, which, not being viewed as the means of any moment of good or of miſery, muſt, according to the foregoing canon, be wholly indifferent.—If, inſtead of *benevolence*, we ſubſtitute, in the rules he has given, *regard to right*, or *attachment to virtue and duty*, they will, I think, be in the main juſt.

Fourthly, We may further obſerve, that the reaſon, which has been ſometimes given for the greater amiableneſs of ſome good actions than others, namely, their being more free, cannot be juſt. It is very improper to ſpeak of degrees of *natural* liberty and neceſſity. Between being the efficient of an effect, and not the efficient; between determining ourſelves, and not determining ourſelves; between *agency* and its contrary, there ſeems no conceivable medium. Every act of volition I am conſcious of, if *my* act,

muſt be entirely *mine*, and cannot be more or leſs *mine*. It is no objection to this, that two or three or any number of cauſes may concur in producing one and the ſame effect: For then each cauſe has its own proper ſhare of the effect to produce, which this cauſe alone produces, and which it would be abſurd to ſay, he was helped to produce.—Beſides, voluntary determination is not a complex and compounded, but ſimple effect, which admits not of more than one cauſe or principle, it being a contradiction to ſuppoſe, that the determination of a being may be partly *his*, and partly *another's*.

But waving this; let us turn our thoughts to what will be more eaſily underſtood, and conſider, that, by the neceſſity which is ſaid to diminiſh the merit of good actions, muſt be meant, not a *natural* (which would take away the whole idea of action and will) but a *moral* neceſſity, or ſuch as ariſes from the influence of motives and affections on the mind; or that certainty of determining one way, which may take place upon ſuppoſition of certain views, circumſtances, and principles of an agent. Now, it is undeniable, that the very greateſt neceſſity of this

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sort is consistent with, nay, is implied in, the idea of the most perfect and meritorious virtue; and, consequently, can by no means lessen it *. The more confidently we may depend on a being's doing an action, when convinced of its propriety, whatever obstacles may lie in his way; that is, the more efficacious and unconquerable the influence of conscience is within him, the more amiable we must think him.—In like manner, the most abandoned and detestable state of wickedness implies the greatest necessity of sinning, and the greatest degree of moral impotence. He is the most vicious man, who is most enslaved by evil habits, or in whom appetite has gained so far the ascendant, and the regard to virtue and duty is so far weakened, that we can, at any time, with cer-

* If, when it is said, that a virtuous action is more amiable the less necessary it is, the meaning be, that it will be more amiable the less the agent is urged to it by instinctive desires, or any motives distinct from virtuous ones; this will be very true. But then, what increases the virtue of the action in this case, is not the mere circumstance of its being less necessary, but its proceeding more from the influence of love to virtue; agreeably to what has been observed in the beginning of this chapter.

tainty fortel, that he will do evil when tempted to it. Let me therefore, by the way, remark, that every idea of liberty muſt be very erroneous, which makes it inconſiſtent with the moſt abſolute and complete certainty or neceſſity of the kind I have now taken notice of, or which ſuppoſes it to overthrow all ſteadineſs of character and conduct. The greateſt influence of motives that can rationally be conceived, or which it is poſſible for any one to maintain, without running into the palpable and intolerable abſurdity of making them *phyſical efficients and agents*, can no way affect liberty. And it is, ſurely, very ſurpriſing, that our *moſt willing* determinations ſhould be imagined to have moſt of the appearance of not proceeding from *ourſelves*; or, that what a man does with the fulleſt conſent of his will, with the leaſt reluctance, and the greateſt deſire and reſolution, he ſhould, for this very reaſon, be ſuſpected not to do *freely*, that is, not *to do at all.*

Again; from the account which has been given of the various degrees of virtue and merit in actions, and of the manner in which we eſtimate them, we may ſee why,

why, "when we judge calmly and impar-" tially," we form much the same judgment of good actions affecting strangers, that we do of those affecting ourselves or friends; and also, why our esteem of an agent is never the less, though he has no opportunities for exerting his virtue, or though his good endeavours may produce effects contrary to those he designed. There is no account to be given of these facts, if virtue be (what it must be if we owe our ideas of it to an implanted sense) no more than a particular kind of agreeable feeling or sensation: For it seems plain upon this supposition, that the sensible pleasure or impression being, in the case I have mentioned, so much magnified or lessened, our conceptions of the degree of virtue must also be proportionably varied: Whereas the account here given, affords us a stable and fixed rule of judgment, and shews us the object concerning which we judge to be real and determinate in itself, and unchangeably the same, whatever our apprehensions of it may be, and in whatever point of view we contemplate it *. But the notion of virtue I have

* See Chap. I. Sect. 3.

have mentioned, makes it plainly no object of any rational eſtimate, leaves no fixed ſtandard of it, and implies that all apprehenſions of it are equally juſt; no man, while he expreſſes truly what he feels, or the emotion accompanying his obſervation of a particular action or character, being capable of pronouncing any thing wrong concerning the morality or immorality of it *. He may, it is true, err with reſpect to the quantity of good produced, or the degrees of kind affection influencing the agent; but theſe are properly, by this ſcheme itſelf, as different from *virtue*, as the cauſe is different from the effect, or as certain taſtes are different from the motion and textures of the ſubſtances producing them.

I have added the reſtriction, "when we "judge calmly and impartially," becauſe it is

* "The diſtinction of moral good and evil is founded on the pleaſure or pain, which reſults from the "view of any ſentiment, or character; and as that "pleaſure or pain cannot be unknown to the perſon "who feels it, it follows, that there is juſt ſo much "vice or virtue in any character, as every one places "in it, and that it is impoſſible, in this particular, we "can ever be miſtaken." See Mr. *Hume's Treatiſe of Human Nature*, Vol. III. page 154.

is too evident to be denied, that the cauſes I have mentioned, do frequently pervert and miſlead our judgments. The partiality of perſons to ourſelves is always apt to biaſs our judgments in their favour, and to enhance our good opinion of them; while a ſtranger, a competitor, an adverſary, or a perſon of a different religious perſuaſion, can often be hardly allowed to have any thing good in him. In like manner, to an enterpriſe which has proved unſucceſsful, or iſſued in harm inſtead of good, we cannot eaſily give thoſe commendations which it may really deſerve; as, on the contrary, the happy conſequences of an undertaking, eſpecially if we ourſelves or thoſe related to us ſhare in them, have a tendency, by intereſting our affections, to engage us to aſcribe much greater merit to it than it may truly have. Againſt theſe and the like ſources of falſe judgment, by which we are ſo very liable to be inſenſibly led aſtray, we ought carefully to guard ourſelves, if we would keep clear of the inconceivable miſchiefs ariſing from party attachments; eſcape the ſad effects of following a blind guide, and ſee characters and men juſt as they are. We ſhould attend to the ſituation in which we

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are placed, and the ſtate and temper of mind in which we view objects, ſtudy to make proper allowances for them, and remember that the degree of approbation or blame due to an action, is determined by ſomewhat more ſtedfaſt than private paſſion, variable impreſſions, or caſual conſequences; and that the true deſert of a character is never altered by the mere circumſtances of our intereſt in it, or relation to it.

Having thus explained the general foundation of the different degrees of virtue and vice in actions, and ſtated the principles and rules by which we judge of them; it will be uſeful next diſtinctly to conſider what is requiſite to conſtitute an agent properly a *virtuous* agent, or to give his *character* this denomination rather than the contrary.

All beings, who have any idea of moral good, muſt have an affection to it, which cannot fail, more or leſs, to influence their actions and temper.—It is not conceivable that a *reaſonable* creature ſhould be void of *all* regard to *reaſon* and its dictates; that he ſhould want all notion of the diſtinction which

which we expreſs when we ſay, "*this* is to "be done, or *that* is not to be done;" or that, having ſuch a perception eſſential to his nature, and always preſent with him, it ſhould ever become *wholly* inefficacious.—Nor, ſtrictly ſpeaking, can a reaſonable being have any tendencies within him *contrary* to rectitude. I mean, he can have no averſion to rectitude as ſuch, or tendency to wrong *as* wrong.—The former cannot be ſuppoſed without ſuppoſing the entire deſtruction of the intelligent powers of the being; and the very idea of the latter is ſelf-repugnant and contradictory. In other words; there can be no being ſo corrupt as that the unreaſonableneſs of an action, that is, his ſeeing reaſon *againſt* it, ſhall be to him a reaſon *for* or not a reaſon *againſt* doing it: Or, whoſe regard to truth and right ſhall not at leaſt have weight enough to turn the ſcale when even, and be ſufficient to render it certain, that he will determine agreeably to them, when he has no temptation to violate them; nothing to divert or miſlead him; nothing to incline or biaſs him any other way.

Theſe things then not being poſſible, and making no part of the idea of an evil character,

racter, it ſhould be remembered, that the ſources of all vice are our inferior propenſities and appetites, which, though in themſelves natural, innocent, and uſeful, cannot but, in our preſent ſtate, on many occaſions, interfere with reaſon, and remain to influence us, as well when they *cannot* be lawfully gratified, as when they *can*. Hence it comes to paſs, that we often actually deviate; and that the reflecting principle is found in men in all degrees of proportion to their inſtinctive powers and deſires. Its rightful place in the mind is that of ſuperiority to all theſe powers and deſires, and of abſolute dominion over them. In the nature of it is implied (to ſpeak after Dr. *Butler*) that it belongs to it, in all caſes, to examine, judge, decide, direct, command, and forbid; that it ſhould yield to nothing whatſoever; that it ought to model and ſuperintend our whole lives; and that every motion and thought, every affection and deſire, ſhould be ſubjected conſtantly and wholly to its inſpection and influence. So intimate to men is reaſon, that a deliberate reſolution not to be governed by it, is ſcarcely poſſible; and that, even when urged by paſſion and appetite,

petite, they can ſeldom avowedly contradict it, or in any inſtance break looſe from its guidance, without the help of diſhoneſt art and ſophiſtry; without many painful winkings at the light, and hard ſtruggles to evade the force of conviction; without ſtudiouſly ſearching for excuſes and palliatives, and thus making ſome ſhift to throw a cloud before their eyes, to reconcile themſelves to the guilty practice, hide its deformity, and deceive themſelves into an opinion of its warrantableneſs or innocence in *their* circumſtances. How plainly may we hence learn how great the force of reaſon is; how ſovereign and unſurmountable it is in its nature; how it adheres to us when we are endeavouring to caſt it off; and what ſway it will, in ſome manner or other, have in our minds, do what we will to obſcure, abuſe, or ſubvert it.

The eſſential *pre-eminence* now obſerved to belong to the reaſonable faculty, is what ought chiefly to be conſidered, in ſettling the true idea of human nature *. It proves to

* The human mind would appear to have little order or conſiſtency in it, were we to conſider it as only a ſyſtem

to us, beyond contradiction, that the original, proper, and ſound ſtate of our natures,

ſyſtem of paſſions and affections, which are continually drawing us different ways, without any thing at the head of them to govern them, and the ſtrongeſt of which for the time neceſſarily determines the conduct. But this is far from being its real ſtate. It has a faculty eſſential to it, to which every power within it is ſubjected, the proper office of which is to reconcile the differences between all our particular affections, to point out to us when and how far every one of them ſhall or ſhall not be gratified, and to determine which, in all caſes of competition, ſhall give way. This faculty is our *Moral faculty*, and it is therefore the reference of all within us to this faculty, that gives us the true idea of human nature. This ſupremacy of the moral faculty, I have obſerved, is implied in the idea of it; but we have alſo a demonſtration of it from fact: For whereas the *leaſt* violation of this faculty, in compliance with *all our other powers* in conjunction, would give us pain and ſhame; the *greateſt* violation, on the contrary, of our other powers, in compliance with *this*, is approved by us; nay, the more we contradict our other powers in compliance with it, and the greater ſacrifice we make of their enjoyments and gratifications to it, the more we are pleaſed with ourſelves, and the higher inward ſatisfaction and triumph we feel.—See Dr. *Butler*'s Sermons on *Human Nature*, and the *Preface*. I find alſo Dr. *Hutcheſon*, in his *Syſtem of Moral Philoſophy*, aſſerting to the ſame purpoſe that our moral faculty, or, as he calls it, the *Moral ſenſe*, is the "directing principle within us, "deſtined

natures, is that in which this faculty, this *their diſtinguiſhing and pre-eminent part*, is indeed,

" deſtined to command all our other powers; and that " the deſire of moral excellence is the ſupreme deter- " mination or affection of our minds, and *different from* " *all our kind affections.*" See p. 61, 67, 68, 70, 77, &c. Vol. I.

Though I entirely approve theſe ſentiments, I cannot help detaining the reader while I make a few remarks, in order to ſhew him how difficult it is to reconcile them with this writer's other ſentiments of virtue. It is much to be wiſhed that he had been more explicit on this ſubject, and explained himſelf more particularly. Had he done this, he would, I fancy, either not have writ in this manner, or given a different account of the nature of moral approbation, and of our moral faculty.

If *Moral approbation* be only a kind of *ſublimer ſenſation*, or a *ſpecies of mental taſte*, it can ſurely have no influence on our purpoſes and actions; much leſs can it have ſuch influence, as to be the ſupreme and commanding principle within us. The *Moral ſenſe* is properly the determination in our natures to be pleaſed or diſpleaſed with actions proceeding from certain motives. It therefore always ſuppoſes ſome diſtinct motives, and can never be itſelf a ſpring of action. Is it not then wonderful to find this very ingenious and able writer, contrary to what he had done in his * *Illuſtrations on the Moral Senſe*, confounding *ſenſes* with *inſtincts*; and, contrary

* See Chap. I.

indeed, (or as to its effect on the life and temper) *pre-eminent*, and all the other powers and

trary to what the very idea of *the Moral ſenſe*, as he ſeems to have explained it, admits of, repreſenting it as a diſtinct ſpring of conduct in the mind, talking of its *force and efforts within us, its recommending, enjoining, controuling, and governing* *, nay, ſetting it up as the *ſovereign director of our affections and actions, ſuperior even to Benevolence*. This can be conſiſtent and proper on no other ſuppoſition, than that our Moral faculty is the Underſtanding, and that moral approbation implies in it the perception of truth, or the diſcernment of a real character of actions.

Again; what is *Moral excellence?* On the principles I am conſidering, it muſt mean, either thoſe affections and actions themſelves to which we give the denomination of *excellent*, or that *grateful ſenſation*, of which, when obſerved, they are the occaſions.—If it means the former, or, in other words, the having and exerciſing an extenſive and ardent benevolence; how can the deſire of it be different from benevolence? How can it be, as Dr. *Hutcheſon* ſays it is, † in *another order of affections?*—If it means the latter, how can it be proper to ſpeak of the deſire and love of it? Can the deſire of the *reliſh* we have for particular objects, as diſtinct from the deſire of the objects themſelves, mean any thing, beſides

* See his *Moral Philoſophy*.

† Ibid. p. 70.—See alſo *the Preface* by the excellent Dr. *Leechman*, p. 44, &c.

and principles are obedient to it.—Now *Goodneſs* in mankind is this ſtate reſtored

beſides the deſire of enjoying the pleaſures attending it; and can it therefore influence our actions any otherwiſe than by means of ſelf-love? In ſhort, it muſt appear, I ſhould think, to every one, very abſurd to ſpeak of the deſire of Moral excellence, to ſuppoſe a calm, immediate determination to *Moral good itſelf*, and to aſcribe a commanding power to the faculty which perceives it, if *Moral good*, or *Moral excellence*, ſignifies nothing diſtinct from a *feeling of the heart*, or nothing abſolute and immutable and independent of the mind. It is however ſome indication of the truth on this ſubject, that thoſe, with whoſe ſentiments it is inconſiſtent, find themſelves led inſenſibly to write and think of our moral faculty, (or the ſenſe of duty and moral excellence) as the ultimate and ſupreme guide of our actions. Nor can it be eaſy for any one who will examine this matter, not to feel that it is unavoidable to conceive this to be indeed the caſe, and that therefore every account of morality muſt be falſe that implies the contrary.

Once more. Our moral faculty, Dr. *Hutcheſon*, we find, acknowledges to be the ſupreme commanding power within us. But can there be a higher power in a reaſonable being than reaſon? and is this power a *ſenſe?* How ſtrange would this ſeem?—I do not find that *Plato*, and others of the antient moraliſts, had any notion that the τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν in man, which they inſiſt ſo much upon, was any thing elſe than *reaſon*.

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and eſtabliſhed. It is the power of reflexion raiſed to its due ſeat of direction and ſovereignty

το φυσει δεσποτικον, τελεςι το λογιςικον, ſays *Alcinous de Doctrina Platonis*, Chap. xxviii.

Let me add, that the very queſtion which has been aſked, and which naturally ariſes when we are ſettling a ſcheme of life and conduct; "what *ought* to be the "end of our deliberate purſuit, *private* or *public* happineſs;" or, "which *ought* to give way, (that is, "which is it *right* ſhould give way) in caſe of oppoſition, the calm ſelfiſh, or the calm benevolent affection?" See the *Preface* juſt quoted, page 45, &c. This queſtion, I ſay, plainly implies, that the idea of *right* in actions is ſomething different from and independent of the idea of their flowing from kind affections, or having a tendency to univerſal happineſs; for certainly, the meaning of it cannot be, which will proceed from kind affection, or which has a tendency to promote univerſal happineſs, following our deſires of private or of univerſal happineſs.—It alſo ſuppoſes, that the perception of *right* influences our choice; for otherwiſe ſuch a queſtion could never be aſked with any view to the determination of our choice, nor could an anſwer to it have any effect this way. —It ſuppoſes finally, that the appeal in all caſes is to our moral faculty, as the ultimate judge and determiner of our conduct; and, that the *regard* to *right*, to *duty*, or to *moral excellence*, is a ſuperior affection within us to *benevolence*; for it comes in, in caſes of interference between ſelf-love and benevolence, to turn the ſcale in favour of benevolence, to recommend and order the generous

reignty in the mind; conſcience fixed and kept in the throne, and holding under its ſway all our paſſions. The leaſt it implies is ſome *predominancy* of good affections, and ſuperiority of virtuous principles above all others. — *Wickedneſs*, on the contrary, is the *ſubverſion* of this original and natural ſtate of the mind, or the prevalency of the lower powers in oppoſition to the authority of reaſon. It implies the *inferiority* of good principles to others within us, a greater attachment to ſome particular objects than to truth and righteouſneſs, or ſuch a defective regard to virtue as is conſiſtent with indulging, *in any inſtance*, known guilt. It is the violent and unnatural ſtate of the

generous part, or, as Dr. *Hutcheſon* ſpeaks *, to make the derermination to public happineſs the ſupreme one in the ſoul.

Thus then, here, as in other parts of this work, we find an object, "*Moral Good*, of unrivalled worth; of "ſupreme influence; eternal, divine, all-governing; "perceived by reaſon; neceſſarily loved and deſired as "ſoon as perceived; and the affection to which (in-"cluding benevolence, but not the ſame with it) is "the chief affection in every good being, and the "higheſt dignity and excellence of every mind."

* Ibid. p. 77.

mind; the depoſition of reaſon, and the exaltation of appetite; the death of the man, and the triumph of the brute; ſlavery in oppoſition to liberty; ſickneſs in oppoſition to health; and uproar and anarchy in oppoſition to order and peace.

If then we would know our own characters, and determine to which claſs of men we belong, the good or the bad; we muſt compare our regard to everlaſting truth and righteouſneſs with our regard to friends, credit, pleaſure, and life; our love of God and moral excellence with our love of inferior objects; the dominion of reaſon with the force of appetite; and find which *prevail.* Until the rational part gets the victory over the animal part, and the main bent of the heart is turned towards virtue; until the principles of piety and goodneſs obtain in ſome degree the ſupremacy, and the paſſions have been made to reſign their uſurped power, we are within the confines of vice and miſery. — There is reaſon to believe that many deceive themſelves by concluding, that ſince they poſſeſs many valuable qualities and feel the workings of good principles, ſince they love virtue and hate vice, and do perhaps good in their

their stations, they can have little reason to distrust their characters; not duly considering the point here insisted upon; or that what they ought chiefly to attend to is the place and degree of these principles in comparison with others; and that it is not those who hate vice, but those who hate it above pain, dishonour, or any thing whatever; not those who love virtue, but those who love it above all that can come in competition with it and possess a *supreme* regard to it, who are truly the virtuous and worthy. It is a common observation, that it is the *ruling passion* that denominates the character. The ruling love of power, fame, and distinction, denominates a man *ambitious*; the ruling love of pleasure, a *man of pleasure*; of money, a *covetous* man. And, in like manner, the ruling love of God, of our fellow-creatures, and of rectitude and truth, denominates a man *virtuous*.

It is natural to enquire here, how in particular we may know, that the love of virtue is thus predominant in us; or what are the marks and effects of that superiority of good affections which has been represented

as eſſential to a good character. In anſwer to this enquiry, it will be proper to obſerve,

Firſt, That the predominant paſſion always draws after it the thoughts, furniſhes them with their principal employment, and gives a tincture of itſelf to all our ſtudies and deliberations. What we moſt love, is that which we oftenеſt think of, and which engages moſt of our attention. If then we would know whether virtue and conſcience *rule* within us, we muſt examine which way the main current of our thoughts runs; what objects preſent themſelves to them moſt frequently and unavoidably; what lies upon them with the greateſt weight; and what, in ſettling all our ſchemes and reſolutions, we dwell moſt upon and take moſt into conſideration.

Particularly; when deliberating about any undertaking, do you conſider, not ſo much how it will affect your credit, fortune, or eaſe, as what, all things conſidered, reaſon and right require of you; what you would expect that another ſhould do in the ſame circumſtances; what good it may produce; how it will appear to you hereafter; what effect it will have on the divine favour to you; how it conſiſts with your intereſt

tereſt on the whole, and ſuits the dignity of a being endowed with your faculties, ſtanding in your relations, and having your expectations? But,

Secondly, This predominancy will principally ſhew itſelf in *actual practice*, or in *the courſe of the life and converſation*. What ſtands foremoſt in our thoughts and hearts, our actions never fail to expreſs. The ſtrength of *inward affections* is always in proportion to their effects on the *external conduct*. When the intellectual and moral principle, therefore, is the *reigning* principle, it excludes every thing irregular and immoral from the behaviour; all unreaſonable courſes are forſaken; the whole of duty is faithfully attended to and diſcharged; no ill habits are ſpared; no wrong diſpoſitions indulged; no known obligation wilfully and ſtatedly neglected.

It is above all things neceſſary to conſtitute our characters good, that our virtue be not *partial*; that we conform ourſelves to every relation in which we ſtand, however made known to us; attend, not to one duty or part of right conduct to the neglect of others, but regard with equal zeal every ſpecies

ſpecies of duty, and the whole of moral rectitude. He that is juſt, kind, meek, and humble, but at the ſame time an habitual drunkard, can have no pretence to genuine virtue. The ſame is true of him who is ſober and temperate, but will deceive and cheat; of him who prays and faſts, is exact in all the external parts of religion, and zealous for truth and piety, but wants candour, gentleneſs, meekneſs, veracity, and charity; of him who is chaſte, generous, friendly, and faithful, but wants *piety*, or *neglects any relations higher than thoſe to men*, in which he may have reaſon to think he ſtands. The reaſon of this has been in part already given in the ſeventh chapter; and we may here add, that an habitual breach of *one* divine law, or retention of *one* boſom-vice, demonſtrates that had the perſon equal temptations to tranſgreſs in all other inſtances, he would do it, and become totally abandoned. As long as any paſſion preſerves an aſcendency over us, and remains rebellious and lawleſs, there is plainly ſomething within us *ſtronger* than virtue, ſomething that maſters and ſubdues it; God and conſcience have not the throne; the due balance continues wanting in the mind,

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and its order and health are not recovered. Until we possess an *equal* and *entire affection* to goodness, we possess none that is *truly acceptable*, or that can be of much account and value. However unblameable a person of the character I am now considering may in several respects be; and with whatever ardour he may apply himself to the practice of some branches of virtue which happen not to lie very cross to his inclinations and temper; it is obvious, that he is not to be reckoned her faithful votary, and that his heart is at the bottom false to her interests and authority. Were not this the case, he would not in *any* instance desert her: He would not prefer to her the indulgence of *any* desire, or resign her for *any* enjoyments. Such is her dignity and amiableness, that every thing is sordid and contemptible compared with her: Such her nature, that she can admit of no rival. He then loves her not at all, who loves her not *first*.—A partial regard to rectitude is inconsistent and absurd. That attachment to it alone is genuine, which has itself merely, its own native obligation and excellence for its object and end, and is unadulterated by the

the mixture of any foreign and indirect motives. And such an attachment will necessarily be directed alike to all the parts and instances of it. What comes short of this is incomplete, unsatisfactory, variable, and capricious. — Be then *consistently* and *thoroughly* good, if you would be so *effectually*. Yield yourself *entirely* and *universally* to the government of conscience, and conquer every adverse inclination, or lay no claim to true virtue, and give up all hope of the happiness in reserve for it.

Every one will see, I do not mean that we must be *perfect*. Of this we are indeed quite incapable. A work of any kind may have all its essentials, and be complete in all its parts, when yet it may be unfinished, and require much more of the hand and labour of its cause. There may be *real* life, at the same time that it admits of great improvement, and is very weak and languishing. Some infirmities will cleave to the best, and it is impossible at present always to hold our passions under such strict discipline, as that they shall *never* surprize or hurry us into any thing which our hearts shall disapprove. But whenever this happens, it is essential to the character

character of a good man, that it is his *greateſt* trouble, and that he is put by it upon more future vigilance. His ſettled *prevailing* regard in heart and life is to truth, piety, and goodneſs; though unhappily he may be ſometimes miſled. Conſcience has the aſcendant; the ſovereignty of reaſon is eſtabliſhed; and ill habits are extirpated, though not to that degree, that he ſhall be in no danger of deviating, and the enemies of his virtue never find him off his guard.

Thirdly, In order to determine whether the love of virtue is predominant in us, it is proper further to enquire, what degree of *delight* we have in it. That which gives the ſoul its prevailing caſt and bent, and engages its chief purſuit, will be *agreeable* to it. All acts ariſing from eſtabliſhed habits are free, unconſtrained and chearful. What our hearts are moſt ſet upon will make the principal part of our happineſs. What we love moſt, or have the greateſt eſteem and reliſh for, muſt be the ſource of our greateſt pleaſures. — Well therefore may *he* ſuſpect

ſuſpect his character, who finds that virtuous exerciſes, the duties of piety, and the various offices of love and goodneſs to which he may be called, are diſtaſteful and irkſome to him Virtue is the object of the chief complacency of every virtuous man; the exerciſe of it is his chief delight; and the conſciouſneſs of it gives him his higheſt joy. He ought to be always ready to undertake whatever it requires from him, never reluctant when convinced in any caſe of his duty, and never more ſatisfied or happy than when engaged in performing it.

Some may probably be apt to enquire here, whether the pleaſures inſeparable from virtue, eſpecially thoſe attending the higher degrees of it, have not a tendency to render it ſo much the leſs diſintereſted, and conſequently to ſink its value.—I anſwer; this may indeed be the conſequence, as far as it is poſſible that the pleaſure itſelf merely attending virtue, can be the motive to the practice of it: But it is ſcarcely in our power (whatever we may think) to be thus refined in our purſuits, or really to deceive ourſelves in this manner. For that only being

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the virtue which any one can juſtly applaud himſelf for, and derive pleaſure from, which proceeds from a regard to *right* and *duty*; it is evidently contradictory to ſuppoſe, that the deſire of this pleaſure itſelf, can in any inſtance be the motive to the practice of it. For a perſon to propoſe acting thus, is exactly the ſame as for him to propoſe acting from *one motive*, in order to have the pleaſure of reflecting that he has acted from *another*.—The truth therefore is, that the pleaſure attending virtue, inſtead of *debaſing*, neceſſarily *ſuppoſes* it, and always increaſes or leſſens in proportion to the degree of virtue preſuppoſed. The more benevolent and worthy a man is, the more he muſt be pleaſed with himſelf; the more ſatisfaction of mind he muſt feel. As much greater as his affection and attachment to virtue are, ſo much the more muſt he rejoice in it, and ſo much the happier it muſt render him.—— How abſurd would it be to aſſert, that the more pleaſure a man takes in beneficence, the leſs diſintereſted it muſt be, and the leſs merit it muſt have? Whereas juſt the reverſe is the truth; for the pleaſure being grounded upon and derived from

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the gratification of the affection of benevolence, the greater degree of it plainly argues only a proportionably greater degree of benevolence.—Such difficulties as these would never have been much regarded, had an observation already made been more considered, namely, "That pleasure is founded in "desire, and not desire in pleasure; or that, "in all cases, *enjoyment* and *happiness* are "the *effects*, not the *causes* and *ends* of our "affections."

There remains another criterion of a good character, which must not be overlooked; I mean, a constant endeavour to *improve*. True goodness must be a *growing* thing. All habits by time and exercise gain strength. It is not to be imagined, that he has found principles of virtue in him, who is not concerned about confirming them to the utmost, and obtaining a total victory over all the enemies of his happiness and perfection. Whoever has tasted of the joys of benevolence and righteousness, aspires after *more* of them, and grieves under the remains of moral imperfection in his character. He cannot possess so little zeal, as only

only to deſire to keep within the bounds of what is innocent or lawful. A perſon who thinks himſelf *good enough*, may be ſure that he is not *good at all*. When the *love of virtue* becomes the *reigning affection*, it will not be poſſible for us to ſatisfy ourſelves with any degrees of it we can acquire.—What is analogous to this, we find to take place, whenever any of our *lower affections* obtain the aſcendency. Every paſſion, when it becomes uppermoſt, is always putting us upon providing new gratifications for it. A man whoſe *prevailing paſſion* is the love of *power*, or of *money*, or of *fame*, ſeldom thinks (be his acquiſitions what they will) that he has acquired enough; but is continually graſping at more, and labouring to add to his glory and treaſures.—This inſatiableneſs which attends the paſſions, when they paſs their natural boundaries, is a ſad pervertion of a diſpoſition which is truly noble, and becomes often the occaſion of the moſt inſupportable miſery. To virtue it ought to be directed. This alone is true gain and true glory. The more aſpiring and inſatiable we are here, the more amiable and which we may not go by induſtry, attention, a due cultivation of our minds, and

bleſſed we are rendered. One of the moſt pitiable ſpectacles in nature, is a covetous, an ambitious or voluptuous perſon, who not contented with what he has, loſes the whole enjoyment it might afford him, and is tortured perpetually on the rack of wild and reſtleſs deſire. But how deſirable and happy is the ſtate of a man, who, in goodneſs, cannot content himſelf with preſent acquiſitions; who anxiouſly cheriſhes in himſelf the high and ſacred ambition to grow wiſer and better, to become liker to the Deity, and advance continually nearer and nearer to perfection?

It would perhaps in ſome reſpects be a needleſs work, as well as not much to my preſent purpoſe, to point out particularly what occaſion and what room the beſt have for improvement. It may, however, be worth obſerving in this place, that, as what renders men more or leſs virtuous, is the greater or leſs degree of the ſuperiority of the moral principle within them above others; ſo this principle is capable of increaſe and advancement without end.

The underſtanding may be very properly conſidered, as either *moral* or *ſpeculative*. Our

Our *ſpeculative underſtanding* is evidently capable of infinite inprovement; and therefore our *moral underſtanding* muſt be ſo likewiſe; for theſe being only different views of the ſame faculty, muſt be inſeparably connected, and cannot be conceived not to influence each other. Every improvement of the ſpeculative knowledge of a good being; every advance in the diſcovery of truth, and addition to the ſtrength of his reaſon, and the extent and clearneſs of its perceptions, muſt be attended with views of moral good proportionably more enlarged and extenſive; with a more clear and perfect acquaintance with its nature, importance and excellence; and conſequently with more ſcope for practiſing it, and a more invariable direction of the will to it. This, joined with the growing effects of habit and conſtant exerciſe, may by degrees ſo ſtrengthen and exalt the practical principle of rectitude, as to cauſe it to abſorb every other principle, and annihilate every contrary tendency.

There is therefore no point of *moral* as well as *intellectual* improvement, beyond the help of proper advantages and opportu-

nities. — The contrary may perhaps, with good reaſon, be ſaid of vice. It is not very eaſy to conceive of any degree of this, beyond which beings may not alſo go through a careleſs neglect of themſelves, through voluntary depravation, ſophiſtical reaſonings, and an obſtinate perſeverance in evil practices. The *leaſt wickedneſs* of character ſuppoſes ſomething which conquers conſcience, and leads a being *habitually* aſtray; and the *greateſt*, conſequently, would imply, that conſcience is ſo far overpowered as to be wholly extirpated, and *all* regard to right and wrong and *all* influence from it deſtroyed; which is a pitch of corruption at which, as I have before obſerved, no being can arrive while he remains, in any degree, reaſonable and accountable. Within this limit, the force of the higher moral and reflecting powers admits of endleſly various degrees of weakneſs, compared with the other powers, and an agent may be, in any degree, more or leſs corrupt, his nature more or leſs perverted, and his mind more or leſs a *Chaos* and a *Hell*.

I might, on this head, further take notice of the extent of our duty; the various hindrances

rances of our improvement; the degeneracy into which we are ſunk, and the numerous enemies which beſet our frail natures. Such is the preſent condition of man; ſo great is the diſorder vice and folly have introduced into our frame; and ſo many are the ſurprizes to which we are liable; that to preſerve in any degree the integrity of our characters and peace within ourſelves, is difficult. But, to find out and correct the various diſorders of our minds; to preſerve an unſpotted purity of life and manners; to deſtroy all the ſeeds of envy, pride, ill-will, and impatience; to liſten to nothing but reaſon in the midſt of the clamour of the paſſions, and continue always faithful to our duty, however courted by the world, allured by pleaſure, or deterred by fear; to cultivate all good diſpoſitions, guard againſt all ſnares, and clear our breaſts of all defilements.—What an arduous work is this?—What unwearied diligence does it call for?—And how much of it, after our utmoſt care and labour, muſt remain undone?

But what a deeper ſenſe of imperfection muſt poſſeſs us, to view ourſelves in the light of God's perfect and eternal rectitude?

How low muſt this ſink us in our eſteem; and what a boundleſs proſpect does it ſet before us, of higher moral excellence to which we ſhould aſpire?

We have then infinite ſcope for improvement, and an everlaſting progreſs before us. With what zeal ſhould we ſet ourſelves to that work now, which we muſt be purſuing for ever, apply ourſelves to the practice of true righteouſneſs, and reſolve to make it our whole ambition to ſubject all our powers to the *reaſonable* and *divine* part of our natures, to weaken the force of rebellious appetites as much as poſſible, and cauſe goodneſs and love and reſignation to be ſo effectually wrought into our tempers, as to poſſeſs themſelves of the whole frame and bent of our ſouls?

One queſtion more on this ſubject may be proper to be attended to.—It may be aſked, "whether a due order of the ſeveral infe-"rior powers of our natures amongſt them-"ſelves, ought not to be taken into our idea "of a good character, as well as their com-"mon ſubordination to the faculty of rea-"ſon?"—It will be a ſufficient anſwer to ſuch an enquiry, to obſerve, that this ſubordination

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of the lower powers implies likewiſe their due ſtate, meaſure, and proportion in reſpect of one another. Tho' ſome of them ſhould be ſtronger than of right they ought to be in compariſon with others; yet, if reaſon governs, the irregularity which would otherwiſe follow will be prevented, and the right balance will by degrees be reſtored; the defect on the one ſide will be *ſupplied* by a higher principle, and the exceſs on the other, will, by the ſame principle, be *reſtrained*; ſo that no harm ſhall enſue to the character, and nothing criminal diſcover itſelf in the life and temper.—It has been elſewhere obſerved, that, as far as we increaſe the force of reaſon, we diminiſh the occaſion for appetite and inſtinct. By conſequence, then, no inconvenience could poſſibly ariſe from any depreſſion of inſtinct, if reaſon is proportionably exalted. But in men it is in fact impoſſible ſo far to improve this faculty, as that the greateſt evils ſhall not ariſe from taking away our inſtincts and paſſions. They were very wiſely and kindly given us to anſwer the purpoſes of our preſent ſtate; to be the ſources of many pleaſures to us; to be our ſole guides till reaſon becomes capable of taking the direction of us, and,

after this, to enforce its dictates, and aid us in the execution of them; to give vigour and spirit to our pursuits, and be, as it were, sail and wind to the vessel of life. What we are to study then is, not to eradicate our passions, (which, were it possible, would be pernicious and wicked) but to keep reason vigilant and immoveable at the helm, and to render them more easily governable by it and more absolutely ministerial to it. When they happen to be in any way unfavourable and perverse, they will indeed throw difficulties in our way and expose us to great danger; but it is the office of reason, at all times, to direct and controul them; to supply the needed force when they are too languid; to moderate their effects when too impetuous, and to guard against every threatening danger.

The character and temper of a man who has naturally the passion of *resentment* strong, and but little compassion to balance it, will certainly degenerate into *malice* and *cruelty*, if he is guided solely by instinctive principles. But, if he is guided by reason and virtue, the exorbitancy of resentment will be checked; all that is hard, unequal, injurious,

revenge-

revengeful, or unkind will be excluded from his conduct; his temper will be ſoftened and humanized; the miſeries of others will be duly regarded, and all that is proper will be done to eaſe their burdens and encreaſe their joys. The like may be ſaid of a perſon whoſe *ſelf-love* and deſire *of diſtinction* are naturally too high in proportion to his *benevolence*; and who, therefore, unleſs governed by reaſon, would become *proud*, *ſelfiſh*, and *ambitious*; and in all other caſes of the undue adjuſtment of the paſſions to one another.—A virtuous man as ſuch cannot allow any exorbitancy in his affections, or any internal diſorder which he is ſenſible of, or which he can poſſibly diſcover and rectify. Neither anger, nor ſelf-love, nor the deſire of fame, can be ſo powerful, or ſo deficient, as to render him envious, moroſe, covetous, luxurious, cowardly, ſelf-neglectful, mean-ſpirited, or ſlothful. Piety and virtue conſiſt in the juſt regulation of the paſſions. No better definition can be given of them. They ſignify nothing any farther than they exclude whatever is inconſiſtent with true worth and integrity; make thoſe who pretend to them *better* in every capacity of life; and render the peeviſh, good-natured; the

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fierce and overbearing, gentle; the obſtinate, complying; the haughty, humble; the narrow and ſelfiſh, open and generous; the voluptuous, temperate; and the falſe and deceitful, faithful and ſincere. Reaſon is repugnant to all kinds of unreaſonableneſs and irregularity. It is eſſential to it to direct, as far as its dominion extends, the paſſions to their proper objects; to confine them to their proper functions; to prevent them from diſturbing our own peace, or that of the world; and, in ſhort, to correct whatever is amiſs in the inward man, and inconſiſtent with its ſound and healthful ſtate.

It is ſcarcely poſſible to avoid reflecting here, on the happy ſtate of the perſon whoſe temper and life are governed by reaſon in the manner I have now deſcribed. What tranquility and bliſs muſt that mind poſſeſs whoſe oppreſſors and tyrants lie vanquiſhed; which has regained its health and liberty; is independent of the world, and conſcious of the peculiar care of the Almighty; where no ſeditious deſire ſhews itſelf, and the inferior powers are all harmonious and obedient; where hope and love, candour, ſincerity, fortitude, temperance,

ance, benignity, piety, and the whole train of heavenly virtues and graces, ſhed their influences, and have taken up their reſidence? What *beauty*, or what *glory* like that of ſuch a mind? How well has it been compared * to a well regulated and flouriſhing ſtate, victorious over every enemy; ſecure from every invaſion and inſult; the ſeat of liberty, righteouſneſs, and peace; where every member keeps his proper ſtation, and faithfully performs his proper duty; where faction and diſcord never appear; order, harmony, and love prevail, and all unite in chearful ſubmiſſion to one wiſe and good legiſlature.—Is there any thing that deſerves ambition, beſides acquiring *ſuch* a mind? In what elſe can the true bleſſedneſs and perfection of man conſiſt? With what *contempt*, as well as *pity*, muſt we think of thoſe who prefer *ſhadows and tinſel* to this *firſt and higheſt good*; who take great care of the order of their *dreſs*, their *houſes* and *lands*, while they ſuffer their *minds* to lie waſte; and anxiouſly purſue *external* elegance,

* This compariſon is finely drawn in *Plato*'s Dialogues on a Republick. See particularly the concluſion of the fourth and ninth Dialogues.

gance, but ſtudy not to make *themſelves* amiable, to cultivate *inward* order, and to eſtabliſh a regular and happy ſtate of the heart and affections?

And now, to conclude this chapter; let me obſerve, that the account it contains of what is neceſſary to conſtitute a good character, gives us a melancholy proſpect of the condition of mankind. True goodneſs, if this account is juſt, is by no means ſo common as we could wiſh; and that indifference and carleſſneſs which we ſee in a great part of mankind, muſt be utterly inconſiſtent with it.—Many of even thoſe who bear fair characters, and whoſe behaviour is in the main decent and regular, are perhaps what they appear to be, more on account of the peculiar favourableneſs of their natural temper and circumſtances; or, becauſe they have never happened to be much in the way of being otherwiſe; than from any genuine and ſound principles of virtue eſtabliſhed within them and governing their hearts. The bulk of mankind is not compoſed of the groſly wicked, or of the eminently good; for, perhaps, both theſe are almoſt equally ſcarce; but of thoſe who are

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as far from being *truly good*, as they are from being *very bad*; of the indolent and unthinking; the neglecters of God and immortality; the wearers of the *form* without the *reality* of piety; of thoſe, in ſhort, who, may be blame-worthy and guilty, not ſo much on account of what they *do*, as what they *do not do*.

We have, therefore, all of us the greateſt reaſon for being careful of ourſelves, and for narrowly watching and examining our hearts and lives.—It is, I doubt, much too common for men to think, that leſs is incumbent on them than is really ſo; and to expect (however unreaſonable ſuch an expectation muſt be in beings, who find it contradicted by all they obſerve of the courſe of the world) that they may riſe to bliſs under the divine government of courſe, without much ſolicitude or labour.—There is not, indeed, any thing more neceſſary, than to call upon men to conſider ſeriouſly the nature of the preſent ſtate, the precarioufneſs of their ſituation, and the danger they are in of remaining deſtitute of that virtuous character and temper, which are the neceſſary qualifications for bliſs. There is nothing they want more, than to

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be warned to ſave themſelves from the evil of the world; and to be admoniſhed, frequently, "that if they would eſcape future "condemnation, they muſt exerciſe vigi-"lance, attention and zeal, and endeavour "to be better than mankind in general "are."

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

The Account of Morality given in this Treatiſe, applied to the Explication and proof of ſome of the principal Doctrines of Natural Religion; particularly, the moral Attributes of God, his moral Government, and a future State of Rewards and Puniſhments.

BEFORE I enter on the ſubjects to be conſidered in this *chapter*, I ſhall beg the reader's patience and attention while I recapitulate part of what has been hitherto ſaid in this treatiſe; and, at the ſame time, endeavour to ſet before him in one view, and the diſtincteſt manner, the whole ſtate of the controverſy about the *foundation of virtue*.

'Tis

'Tis diſcouraging to think of the confuſion which is occaſioned in moſt debates and enquiries, by the ambiguous ſenſes of words. Were it poſſible for us to underſtand preciſely one another's meaning, to obſerve accurately our different views, and to communicate our naked and genuine ſentiments to one another, without being under the neceſſity of having them more or leſs miſtaken, through the imperfections of language; we ſhould find, that there are few or no points on which we differ ſo much as we ſeem to do. Many queſtions there are which have been, for many ages, controverted with great zeal, though the diſputants on both ſides have, in reality, all along meant much the ſame, and been nearly agreed, as far as they had ideas. I ſay, *as far as they had ideas*; for it is certain, that there is nothing that the generality of men want more; and that a controverſy may become very tedious and voluminous, while neither party have any determinate *opinions* about the ſubject of it; but their zeal and contention are entirely for or againſt a ſet of phraſes. This evil will never be cured, till men learn to *think* as well as *talk*, and reſolve to proceed from *words* to *things*, to give

give up their attachment to particular phraſes, and ſtudy more, in all caſes, what is *meant* than what is *ſaid*.

A great deal of this perplexity, ariſing from the ambiguity of words, has attended the ſubject now before us? and particularly it ſeems that the word, *foundation*, admits of various ſenſes, which, if not attended to, cannot but produce endleſs diſputes. For how is it poſſible, that we ſhould agree in determining what the *foundation* of virtue is, when we annex different meanings to the term *foundation*, and therefore have different ideas of the nature and deſign of the queſtion?

Let us then conſider accurately what we mean, when we enquire what is the "FOUNDATION of virtue." And let it be premiſed, that by VIRTUE is now meant ABSOLUTE VIRTUE, or that RIGHTNESS, PROPRIETY, or FITNESS of certain actions, which all own in ſome inſtances or other, and which can be explained no other way, than by deſiring every one to reflect on what, in ſuch inſtances, he is conſcious of. When now we aſk, what the FOUNDATION *of virtue* thus underſtood, is, we may mean, "what "is the *true account or reaſon* that ſuch and

" ſuch actions are *right*, or appear to us " under this notion?"—And *but two accounts* of this can poſſibly be aſſigned.—It may be ſaid either, that *right* is a ſpecies of *ſenſation*, like taſte or colour, and therefore denotes nothing abſolutely true of the actions to which we apply it; which lays the foundation of it entirely in the will and good pleaſure of the author of our natures. Or, on the other hand, it may be ſaid, that it denotes *a real character of actions*, or ſomething *true* of them; ſomething neceſſary and immutable and independent of our perceptions, like *equality*, *difference*, *proportion*, or *connection*; and, therefore, that no other account is to be given, why ſuch and ſuch actions are right, than why the natures of things are what they are; why, for example, the oppoſite angles made by the interſection of two right lines are *equal*, or why it is *impoſſible*, that any thing ſhould exiſt without a cauſe.—It would be extremely unreaſonable for any perſon to pretend to want farther information here, and to aſk, what is the foundation of TRUTH? When we have traced a ſubject to the natures of things, we are, in all caſes, completely ſatisfied; and it is trifling and impertinent

nent to desire any farther account. Would *he* deserve an answer, or could we think him quite in his senses, who should seriously ask, why the whole is *greater* than a part, or two *different* from twenty? It has been said, that the *will of God* is the foundation of truth. This is asserting what no one can understand. It is sacrificing to the single attribute of *will* all the divine perfections; and even, under the appearance of magnifying it, subverting it, and taking away the very possibility of it. For upon what is it founded itself? Can there be *power* without *possibles*, or *will* without *objects*, without any thing to be willed? Or can *these*, which *will supposes*, be *dependent* upon it, and *derived* from it?—Some perhaps there may be, who, with me, will further think, that *truth* having a reference to *mind*; *necessary truth*, and the *eternal natures of things*, imply a *necessary*, *eternal mind*; and *force* us upon the acknowledgment of the *Divine*, *unoriginated*, *incomprehensible wisdom and intelligence*.

Again; when we enquire what is the *foundation* of virtue, we may mean, "what "are the *primary principles and heads* of vir- "tue; or, the considerations inferring obli-

" gation in particular cases and rendering " particular actions *right?*" Thus, should I enquire why a person *ought* to act in such or such a particular manner, in certain circumstances: it would be proper to reply, because he has received benefits from others; because it conduces to his happiness; or because God commands it. And, in this sense, there will be as many *foundations* of virtue, as there are *first* principles of it. This, probably, is what those mean by *foundation*, who will allow no other *foundation* of virtue, than *private happiness*; that is, they mean that nothing *obliges*, nothing renders actions, in any circumstances, *fit* to be performed, but some prospect of obtaining private happiness, and avoiding private misery. Should we enquire farther of such persons, what it is that renders promoting our own good *right*, and how we are to account for its being the object of our desires and studies; they would not, probably, be against recurring to truth and the natures of things; and thus we should be agreed about the *foundation* of virtue, in the former sense, and differ only about what is discussed in the seventh chapter, or the *subject-matter* of virtue.—This also must necessarily be

be the meaning of thoſe, who plead for the *will of God* as the only efficient of virtue and obligation, as far as they are not for making it likewiſe the efficient of *all* truth. If they will carefully conſider, why we *ought* to do the will of God, or what they mean by the *obligation* to obey God, they will find, that they muſt either make this to be an *inſtance* of neceſſary ſelf-evident truth and duty; or account for it from the power of God to make us happy or miſerable, as we obey or diſobey him; which would reduce this ſcheme into that of ſelf-love, and make all the ſame obſervations applicable to it *.

We may once more obſerve, that by the *foundation* of virtue, may be meant, "the "*motives* and *reaſons*, which lead us to it, "and ſupport the practice of it in the "world." This muſt be the meaning of thoſe who are for uniting the ſeveral ſchemes, and repreſent *the will of God*, *ſelf-intereſt*, the *reaſons of things*, and the *moral ſenſe*, as all diſtinct and coincident *foundations* of virtue. 'Tis indeed undeniable, that theſe, with their joint force, carry us to virtue.

* See Note F in the *Appendix*.

But, if we keep to the firſt ſenſe of the term *foundation*, it will appear that only one or other of the two laſt can be the true foundation of virtue.

He that would obtain a yet more accurate view of this ſubject, and avoid, as much as poſſible, perplexity and confuſion, ſhould farther attend to the various acceptations of the words *action* and *virtue*. That which I have ſtiled the *virtue of the agent*, or *practical virtue*, is to be underſtood in a very different manner from *abſolute virtue*. But of this diſtinction I have already, in the eighth chapter, given an account which ſeems to me ſufficient.

It remains that I now make ſome general remarks on the whole of what has been hitherto advanced in this treatiſe.

What is here of moſt conſequence is, to point out the advantages attending the account I have given of morality in our enquiries into the nature and character of the firſt Cauſe, and in explaining and proving the facts of *Natural Religion*.

Were it certain, that the origin of our moral perceptions is an implanted ſenſe, it could no more be inferred from our having ſuch

ſuch perceptions, that the Deity likewiſe has them, than the like inference could be drawn with reſpect to any of our other mental reliſhes, or even the ſenſations of ſight and hearing. Were there nothing, in the natures and reaſons of things, to be a ground of a moral and righteous diſpoſition in the mind of the Deity, or by which we could account for his preferring happineſs to miſery, and approving goodneſs, truth, and equity, rather than their contraries, it would be far leſs eaſy than it is to aſcertain his will and character; nay, I think, it would be utterly inconceiveable to us, how he could have any moral character at all.—This may appear, not only from the reaſoning uſed in the latter part of the firſt chapter, but alſo from the following reaſoning.

If, in reſpect of *intrinſick* worth and goodneſs, all rules and meaſures of conduct are alike; if no end can have more *in* it than another to recommend it to the choice of the Deity; if, in particular, there is nothing, in the natures of things, to be the ground of his preference of happineſs to miſery, or of his approbation of goodneſs rather than cruelty; then his nature muſt be eſſentially indifferent alike to all ends; it was always

as poſſible that he ſhould be *malevolent* as *benevolent*; there is no account to be given of his being one of theſe, rather than the other; and therefore he cannot poſſeſs any determinate character. For moſt certainly, whatever he is, he is *neceſſarily*. There can be nothing in his nature, which he might have wanted, or of which he can be conceived to be deprived, without a contradiction.

It will be of uſe, towards illuſtrating this reaſoning, to apply it in the following caſe: —Suppoſe only one body to exiſt in nature, and let it be conceived to be in motion in any particular direction. Now, either we might certainly know concerning this body, that it could not have been moving from eternity in this direction without any cauſe, or we might not. If we might; it could be only on ſuch principles as the following. Whatever has exiſted from eternity without an efficient cauſe, muſt have exiſted *neceſſarily*. But, in the caſe under conſideration, it was from eternity equally poſſible, that the ſuppoſed body ſhould have moved in any other direction; and, conſequently, there being no account of its motion from neceſſity, or the nature of the thing, it muſt have been moved by ſome cauſe, and excluſive of all cauſality

and

and efficiency, its motion and even exiſtence are impoſſible.

The reaſoning in the former caſe is the ſame with this. If, in the one caſe, among many directions of motion, in themſelves alike poſſible, 'tis abſurd to ſuppoſe any particular direction to take place without ſome *directing* cauſe; it muſt be equally abſurd in the other, amongſt many determinations of will and character in themſelves indifferent and alike poſſible, to ſuppoſe any particular determination to take place without ſome *determining* cauſe.

I might go on to obſerve, that if, *from the natures of things and neceſſity*, there is no ſuch thing as a rule of conduct to intelligent beings, then there is *neceſſarily* no ſuch thing; the whole notion of it is contradictory.

The diſtinction between *neceſſary* and *contingent* exiſtence, is the main foundation of all that we believe concerning the firſt cauſe. This diſtinction we perceive intuitively. The particular objects by the contemplation of which it is ſuggeſted to us, force the idea of it upon our minds. Some things appear to us ſelf-evidently to be *effects*, *precarious* and *arbitrary* in their natures, indifferent to exiſtence or non-exiſtence, and poſſible alike to

poſſeſs

poſſeſs any one of an infinity of different manners of exiſtence. Theſe things then we know certainly to be *derived*, *dependent*, and *produced*. Of this kind are matter and motion; the form and order of the world; and all particular ſenſible objects. We do not ſee more clearly, in any caſe, that there is ſuch a thing as *productive power*, or a *dependence* of one thing on another, than we do, that theſe objects, and, in general, all imperfect and limited exiſtences, are *effects*, and require a *cauſe*.—In ſhort; whatever we can *conceive* not to be, 'tis certain *may* not be; and whatever *may not* be, muſt, if it exiſts, have had its exiſtence produced by ſome cauſe.—On the contrary, ſome things we ſee intuitively not to be *effects*, to want no cauſe, to be underived, ſelf-exiſtent, and unchangeable. To ſuppoſe otherwiſe of them we ſee to imply a contradiction. We cannot poſſibly conceive them either not to be, or to be in any reſpect different from what they are. Of this kind are *ſpace* and *duration*, and all *abſtract truth* and *poſſibles*.

But waving theſe obſervations *; it will, be

* See Chap. 5th, and the Diſſertation on the Being and Attributes of the Deity at the end of this Volume.

be more to the preſent purpoſe to repeat an obſervation already made, namely, that the account of morality I have oppoſed, ſeems to imply that the Deity, if benevolent, muſt be ſo *contrary* to his underſtanding. This ſeems to be as evident, as it is, that to be conſcious of doing what is indifferent, or of employing power in purſuing an end which has nothing in it worthy of purſuit, is to be conſcious of trifling. There is at leaſt ſufficient weight in this obſervation to ſhew, that it is the groſſeſt diſparagement to the perfections of the Deity, to ſuppoſe him actuated entirely by unintelligent inclination; or to conceive of him as proceeding invariably in a courſe of action, which has nothing in it *right*, and which, conſequently, he cannot *really approve* *.

Reaſonings of this kind plainly tend to ſhew us, that if the diſtinctions of right and wrong, and moral good and evil, are nothing in the natures of things; the Deity can be of no character. This indeed is a concluſion which is contradicted by certain fact; for his creating at all, and much more final

cauſes,

* See chap. I. ſect. 3. and alſo chap. III. latter end.

cauſes, and his acting with the uniformity and wiſdom we ſee in the conſtitution of nature, imply ſome diſpoſitions, ſome principle of action, or ſome character. But this is only ſaying, that the whole courſe of things proves the ſcheme upon which I have been arguing, and from whence ſuch a concluſion follows, to be falſe *.

But though in oppoſition to the precedent reaſonings, and the ſentiments on which they are founded, *effects* thus prove the Deity to be of ſome character; yet it may be doubted, whether, from theſe alone, we could obtain any undeniable proofs of his being of the particular character of goodneſs; for it ſeems not impoſſible to account for them on other ſuppoſitions. An unintelligent agent cannot produce order and regularity, and therefore wherever *theſe*

* "To ſuppoſe God to approve one courſe of action, or one end, preferably to another, which yet his acting at all from deſign, implies that he does, without ſuppoſing ſomewhat prior in that end, to be the ground of the preference, is as inconceiveable, as to ſuppoſe him to diſcern an abſtract propoſition to be true, without ſuppoſing ſomewhat prior in it to be the ground of the diſcernment." See *Butler's Analogy*, p. 170. 4th edit.

theſe appear, they *demonſtrate* deſign and wiſdom in the cauſe. But it cannot be ſaid in like manner, that a ſelfiſh, a capricious, or even a malicious agent, may not produce happineſs; nor conſequently, that the appearance of this in an effect demonſtrates the goodneſs of the cauſe. Let it be granted, as ſurely it muſt, that good is greatly prevalent in what we ſee of the works of God; that all that comes within our notice of the world, ſhews kind deſign; and that the primary direction of every law and regulation of nature, is to happineſs, "yet who "knows (may ſome ſay) what different ſcenes "may have heretofore exiſted, or may *now* "exiſt in other diſtricts of the univerſe. An "evil being may *ſometimes* be the cauſe of "good, juſt as a good being may of ſuffer-"ings and pain. How little do we ſee of na-"ture? From what we obſerve in a *point* "and a *moment*, what certain concluſion "can we draw with reſpect to what prevails "*univerſally* and *eternally?* Concerning a "plan of boundleſs extent, and which was "contrived and is carried on by an incom-"prehenſible being, what can be learned "from ſuch a ſuperficial and imperfect ob-

ſervation

" ſervation as we can make of what is next " to nothing of it? Can it be right to " eſtabliſh a general concluſion on a ſingle " experiment, or to determine the charac- " ter and views of a being, of whom inde- " pendently of experience we can know " nothing, from a few acts which will bear " ſeveral different interpretations? If we " had nothing diſtinct from effects to rely " on, nothing in neceſſary truth and rea- " ſon to argue from, would it not be na- " tural to enquire with doubt and anxiety, " whether great changes may not hereafter " happen in the world; whether caprice or " a love of variety, inſtead of goodneſs, may " not be the principle of action in the firſt " cauſe; or whether *the deſign of what we now* " *ſee and feel, may not be to give a keener edge* " *to future diſappointment, and thus univer-* " *ſal miſery appear at laſt to be intended* *?"

What regard is due to theſe objections, every one may determine as he pleaſes. I am far from thinking them of weight enough to ſhew that effects, independently of all ar-

* *Wiſdom the firſt ſpring of action in the Deity, by Mr.* Grove, chap. I. ſect. 9.

arguments from moral fitneſs, cannot furniſh us with ſufficient arguments for the goodneſs of God.

When we firſt reflect, that undoubtedly he is of ſome will and character, and that it is in itſelf as poſſible and as credible, that he ſhould be of this particular character as any other; the conſideration after this, that his works as far as we ſee them, have upon them obvious marks of benignity and love, will neceſſarily incline us to think that he is good. When we have no more evidence for than againſt a propoſition, any preponderating circumſtance ought to determine our underſtandings and engage our aſſent, with an aſſurance proportionable to its apparent weight. And with reſpect to the objections and ſuſpicions before-mentioned, it may be juſtly ſaid, that we are to judge of what we do *not* ſee by what we *do* ſee, and not the contrary; and that conſequently, as long as the appearance on the whole of what lies before us of God's works, though comparatively little, is clearly as if happineſs was their end, the fair concluſion is, that this is indeed the truth. Beſides; the more extenſive we ſuppoſe the creation, the greater chance

chance there was againſt our being caſt into that part of it wherein goodneſs is ſo much exerted, if indeed any other principle influences the author of it, to which therefore, on the whole, it muſt be ſuppoſed to be conformable.—Some however, (particularly thoſe who entertain diſmal ideas of human life, as upon the whole unhappy) are likely, if they think conſiſtently, not to be much influenced by this argument. What regard is in reality due to the appearances of evil in the world, and what reaſon ariſes from hence, and from the greater degrees of happineſs which we imagine we ſee *might* have been communicated, to ſuſpect that goodneſs may not be the ſpring of action in the Deity, are queſtions of conſiderable importance, which have been often well diſcuſſed.—It deſerves particular regard, that the *natural* ſtate of a being is always his *ſound*, and *good*, and *happy* ſtate; that all the corruptions and diſorders we obſerve are plainly *unnatural deviations and exceſſes*; and that no inſtance can be produced wherein *ill* as ſuch is the genuine tendency and reſult of the original conſtitution of things *,

If

* It might have been objected here, that from effects alone it can at beſt be only poſſible to gather the *preſent* diſpoſition

If now, at the ſame time that the voice of all nature, as far as it comes within our notice, furniſhes us with theſe arguments, it appears to us, that all ends are not the ſame to an intelligent regard; that there is ſomething intrinſically *better* in goodneſs, veracity, and juſtice, than in their contraries, ſomething morally different in their natures; our evidence for God's moral attributes, will be increaſed in the ſame degree, that we think we have reaſon to believe this. And if it appears to us clear and certain, that intelligence implies the approbation of beneficence; that the underſtanding is the power which judges of moral differences; and that from a neceſſity in the natures of things, goodneſs rather than malice muſt conſtitute the diſpoſition and end of every mind in proportion to the degree of its knowledge and perfection; our evi-

diſpoſition of the Deity; and that though they demonſtrated this to be benevolent, yet we ſhould ſtill want evidences to prove the *ſtability* of his character, or that he always has been and will for ever continue to be good. The full reply to ſuch objections may be learnt from the obſervations on the nature of the *neceſſary* exiſtence of the Deity which will be found at the end of this Treatiſe.

dence, on the preſent point, will become equally clear and certain.

But, how much inferior evidence on points the moſt intereſting, ſhall we be forced to ſatisfy ourſelves with, if we reject theſe principles, and embrace the opinion, that all our ideas of *worth* and *virtue*, of *morality* and *excellence*, have no foundation in truth and reality?—Our approbation of goodneſs, if derived from intellectual perception, infers *demonſtrably* the goodneſs of God; but if derived entirely from an arbitrary ſtructure of our minds, is at beſt, only one inſtance among many of kind deſign; and was neceſſary, ſuppoſing the univerſal plan, whatever it is, to be ſuch as required that what is *here*, and in *this part of duration*, revealed of it, ſhould carry the appearance of benevolence. A few facts, when we have antecedent evidence from the nature of the ſubject, may confirm a truth beyond the poſſibility of doubt; but can, by no means, give equal ſatisfaction when we have no ſuch evidence, and experience is our only medium of information.

Indeed, upon the principles defended in this treatiſe, nothing can be more eaſy to be aſcertained than the moral perfections of the Deity.—The *nature* of happineſs is, without

without doubt, as ſhewn in the 3d chapter, the true account of the deſire and preference of *private* happineſs. This leads us unavoidably to conclude, that it is alſo the true account of the deſire and preference of *publick* happineſs. And if it is, it appears at once, that the Deity muſt be benevolent.—In ſhort; if there is a rule of right, ariſing from the differences and relations of things, and extending as far as all the poſſible effects of power; which, to the degree it is known, forces the regard and affection of all reaſonable beings, and which its own nature conſtitutes the proper, the ſupreme, and eternal guide and meaſure of all their determinations: If, I ſay, there is indeed ſuch a rule or law, it follows *demonſtrably*, that the *firſt intelligence*, that is, the Deity, muſt be under the direction of it more than any other nature; as much more, as his underſtanding is higher, and his knowledge more perfect. He is, in reality, the living independent ſpring of it. He cannot contradict it, without contradicting *himſelf*. 'Tis a part of the idea of reaſon, and therefore, in the *ſelf-exiſtent infinite reaſon*, muſt be of abſolute and ſovereign influence.

There can therefore be no difficulty in determining what the principle of action is

in the Deity. As it is evident that the ſeat of *infinite power* muſt be the ſeat of *infinite knowledge*; ſo it appears from hence no leſs evident, that it muſt be alſo the ſeat of *abſolute rectitude:* and theſe qualities, thus implying one another and *eſſentially one*, complete the idea of Deity, and exhibit him to us in the moſt awful and glorious light. Amongſt the various poſſible ſchemes of creation, and ways of ordering the ſeries of events, there is a *beſt*; and this is the rule and end of the divine conduct; nor is it poſſible, that ſeeing this, and all things being equally eaſy to him, he ſhould deviate from it; or, that the being into whoſe nature, as the *neceſſary examplar and original of all perfection*, every thing true, right, and good, is ultimately to be reſolved, ſhould ever chuſe what is contrary to them. To underſtand perfectly what upon the whole is moſt fit, and to follow it invariably thro' all duration and the whole extent of the univerſe, is the higheſt notion we can frame of MORAL EXCELLENCE.

Here let us, by the way, conſider what we can wiſh for beyond being under the care of this being; and with what joy we may reflect, that as certainly as God exiſts, all

all is well; a perfect order of administration prevails in nature, and all affairs are under the wisest and kindest direction.

But to go on; the independency and self-sufficiency of God raise him above the possibility of being tempted to what is wrong. 'Tis not conceivable that he should be subject to partial views, mistake, ignorance, passion, selfishness, or any of the causes of evil and depravity of which we have any notion. His nature admits of nothing arbitrary or instinctive; of no determinations that are independent of reason, or which cannot be accounted for by it. In an underived being of absolute simplicity, and all whose attributes must be essentially connected, there can be no interfering properties. The same necessity and reasons of things cannot be the ground of the approbation and love of rectitude, and of biasses contradictory to it.

Before we quit what we are now upon, it will be proper, lest I should be misunderstood, to observe particularly, that whenever I represent *necessity* as the account of the *rectitude* of the Deity, or speak of *goodness* as *essential* to him, it is the *principle* of

rectitude I mean; and not the *actual exercise* of this principle. No absurdity can be greater than to suppose, that the divine being *acts* by the same kind of necessity by which he *exists*, or that the *exertions* of his power are in the same sense necessary with his *power itself*, or with the *principles* by which they are directed. All voluntary action is, *by the terms*, free, and implies the *physical possibility* of forbearing it. What is meant by this *possibility* is not in the least inconsistent with the utmost *certainty of event*, or with the *impossibility*, IN ANOTHER SENSE, that the action should be omitted.—It may be *infinitely* more depended upon, that God will never do wrong, than that the wisest created being will not do what is most destructive to him, without the least temptation. There is, in truth, *equal* impossibility, tho' not the *same kind* of impossibility, that he who is the abstract of all perfection should deviate into imperfection in his conduct, infinite reason act unreasonably, or eternal righteousness unrighteously; as that infinite knowledge should mistake, infinite power be conquered, or necessary existence cease to exist.—It may be as *really* impossible for a person

perſon in his ſenſes, and without any motive urging him to it, to drink poiſon, as it is for him to prevent the effects of it after drinking it; but who ſees not theſe impoſſibilities to be totally different in their meaning? or what good reaſon can there be againſt calling the one a *moral*, and the other a *natural* impoſſibility?

This diſtinction, which many are unwilling to acknowledge, and which yet, I think, of great importance, may perhaps be in ſome meaſure illuſtrated by what follows.

Suppoſe a die or ſolid, having a million of faces: It may be ſaid to be *certain*, that an agent void of ſkill will not, the firſt trial, throw an aſſigned face of ſuch a die; for the word *certain* is often uſed in a ſenſe much lower. But that ſuch an agent ſhould throw an aſſigned face of ſuch a die, a million of times together without failing, few would ſcruple to pronounce *impoſſible*. The *impoſſibility* however meant in this caſe, would plainly be very different from an abſolute *phyſical* impoſſibility; for if it is poſſible to ſucceed the firſt trial, (as it undoubtedly is) it is equally poſſible to ſucceed the ſecond, the third, and all the ſubſequent

trials; and conſequently, *in this ſenſe of poſſibility*, 'tis as poſſible to throw the given face * a million of times together, as the firſt time.—But farther, that a million of dice, each having a million of faces, and thrown together for a million of times ſucceſſively, ſhould always turn the ſame faces, will be pronounced yet much more impoſſible. Nevertheleſs, it will appear, by the ſame reaſoning with that juſt uſed, that there is the ſame *natural* poſſibility of this, as of any other event.—If any one thinks what is now ſaid of no weight, and continues yet at a loſs about the difference between theſe two ſorts of impoſſibility, let him compare the impoſſibility that the laſt mentioned event ſhould happen, with the impoſſibility of throwing any faces which there are not upon a die.

To purſue this exemplification yet farther, let us conſider that the improbability of throwing any particular face of a die, is always in proportion to the number of faces which it has. When therefore the number of

* There is in truth an infinity of numbers of trials, in which it is morally certain this would actually happen.

of faces is *infinite*, the improbability of the event is *infinite*, or it becomes *certain* it will not happen, and *impoſſible* that it ſhould happen, in a ſenſe ſimilar to that in which we ſay, it is *impoſſible* a wiſe man ſhould knowingly and without temptation do what will be deſtructive to him. However, as one face muſt be thrown, and the given face has the ſame chance for being thrown with any other, it is *poſſible* this face may be thrown, and the aſſigned event happen; in the ſame manner as a wiſe man has it *in his power*, knowingly and without temptation, to do what will be deſtructive to him. The certainty that a particular face of an infinite die will not be thrown *twice together*, exceeds infinitely the certainty that it will not be thrown *the firſt time*; but the certainty that it will not be thrown *perpetually and invariably for an infinity of trials*, is greater than this laſt mentioned certainty in the ſame proportion that the *infiniteth power of infinite* is greater than *infinite*. Yet ſtill the impoſſibility of event which all muſt be ſenſible of in theſe caſes, is as far from a phyſical one, as in the ſimpleſt caſes. Now, he that ſhould in ſuch caſes, confound theſe different

different kinds of impoſſibility, (or neceſſity) would be much more excuſeable, than he that confounds them, when conſidering the events depending on the determinations of free beings, and comparing them with thoſe ariſing from the operation of blind and unintelligent cauſes. The one admits of endleſly various degrees; the other of none. That neceſſity by which twice two is not twenty, or a maſs of matter does not continue at reſt when impelled by another, is wherever found, always the ſame, and incapable of the leaſt increaſe or diminution.

I ſhall only add on this head, that the neceſſity of the eternal conformity of all the divine actions to the rules of wiſdom and righteouſneſs, may be exemplified by the certainty, that an infinite number of dice, each having an infinite number of faces, and thrown all together for an infinite number of trials, would not always turn preciſely the ſame faces; which though infallibly true that it will not happen, yet *may* happen, in a ſenſe not very unlike that in which the Deity has a power of deviating from rectitude; of creating, for inſtance, a miſerable

miſerable world, or of deſtroying the * world after a ſuppoſed promiſe not to deſtroy it.

But diſmiſſing this ſubject; let us now apply the account which has been given in this treatiſe of the nature and ſubject-matter of morality, to another Queſtion of conſiderable importance relating to the Deity; I mean, the Queſtion "whether all "his moral attributes are reducible to be-"nevolence; or whether this includes the "*whole* of his character?"

It has been ſhewn, that the negative is true of inferior beings, and in general, that virtue is by no means reducible to benevolence. If the obſervations made to this purpoſe are juſt, the queſtion now propoſed is at once determined. Abſolute and eternal rectitude, (or a regard to what is in all caſes

* If any diſlike the word *infinite* as uſed here, they may ſubſtitute the word *indefinite* in its room, which will anſwer my purpoſe as well.

The analogy I have here inſiſted on anſwers, I think, the end of an illuſtration with great exactneſs, and on this account, I hope, I ſhall be excuſed if it ſhould appear to have any thing in it unſuitable to the dignity of the ſubject to which it is applied.

caſes moſt fit and righteous) is properly the ultimate principle of the divine conduct, and the ſole guide of his power. In this GOODNESS is firſt and principally included. But GOODNESS and RECTITUDE, how far ſoever they may coincide, are far from being identical. The former reſults from the latter, and is but a part of it. Which therefore ſtands firſt in the divine mind, and which ſhould give way, ſuppoſing an interference ever poſſible, can (one would think) admit of no controverſy. For will any perſon ſay, that it is not becauſe it is *right*, that the Deity promotes the happineſs of his creatures; or that he would promote it in any *inſtances* or in any *manner*, wherein it would be *wrong* to promote it;—Such reaſonings and ſuppoſitions will, I know, appear very abſurd to ſome: But it is certain they are not abſurd, unleſs it muſt be taken for granted, that *right* ſignifies only conduciveneſs to happineſs *, and that nothing but ſuch

* "The *righteouſneſs* and goodneſs of actions is not "the ſame notion with their *tendency to univerſal happineſs*, or flowing from the deſire of it. This latter "is the higheſt ſpecies of the former. Our *moral ſenſe* "has alſo other immediate objects of approbation, "&c." Dr. *Hutcheſon's Syſtem of Moral Philoſophy*, book ii. chap. iii. ſect. ii.

ſuch conduciveneſs can at any time render one action morally better than another.

It muſt however be admitted, that the character of God is much more nearly reducible to goodneſs, than that of any inferior beings.—What I mean will be better underſtood, if we make the ſuppoſition of a *ſolitary being* * *not perfectly happy*, but capable of acquiring happineſs for himſelf, and improving in it; and afterwards conſider, into how narrow a compaſs the obligations of ſuch a being would be brought. Having by the ſuppoſition no connection with any other reaſonable being, what could require his attention beſides his own intereſt? What elſe could he calmly and deliberately propoſe to himſelf as the end at which it would be *right* for him conſtantly to aim? The exerciſe of gratitude, benevolence, juſtice, and veracity, would be impoſſible to him; and every duty would vaniſh, except that of prudence,

* The ſame ſuppoſition is made in a pamphlet, intitled, *Divine Benevolence; or an attempt to prove that the principal end of the Divine Providence and Government, is the Happineſs of his Creatures*, printed for Noon, 1731. —I am ſorry this pamphlet is out of print. The author was Mr. BAYES, one of the moſt ingenious men I ever knew, and for many years the miniſter of a diſſenting congregation at TUNBRIDGE WELLS.

prudence, or a wiſe and ſteady purſuit of his own higheſt good?

If now we change the ſuppoſition, and conſider a being, ſuch as the Deity, who is *perfectly happy in himſelf*, abſolutely ſupreme and independent, and the creator of all things; will it not evidently appear, that he can have nothing to employ his power, and no end to carry on, different from the *good of his creatures?* As all the views, ſtudies and endeavours of the *ſolitary being* I have ſuppoſed, neceſſarily terminate in *himſelf*; the contrary muſt be true of this being. To him *others* muſt be all; and the care of their intereſts, the *due adjuſtment* of their ſtates among themſelves, and the *right adminiſtration* of their affairs muſt comprehend the principles and views of all his actions. As he can have no ſuperior, is ſelf-ſufficient, and incapable of having any *private end* to carry on, it is wholly inconceivable, what, beſides a diſpoſition to communicate bliſs, could engage him *at firſt* to produce any being, or what *afterwards* can influence him to continue the exerciſe of his power in preſerving and directing the beings he has made, beſides ſome regard to their good, or ſome reaſons taken from their circumſtances and wants.

Happineſs

Happineſs is an object of eſſential and eternal value. The fitneſs of communicating it gave birth to the creation. It was for this the world was produced, and for this it is continued and governed. Beauty and order, which have been ſtrangely ſaid to be of equal, nay ſuperior value, are chiefly to be regarded as ſubſervient to this, and ſeem incapable of being propoſed as proper *ends* of action. How triflingly employed would that being appear to us, who ſhould devote his time and ſtudies to the making of regular forms, and ranging inanimate objects into the moſt perfect ſtate of order and ſymmetry, without any further view? What would be the worth or importance of any ſyſtem of mere matter, however beautifully diſpoſed; or, of an univerſe in which were diſplayed the moſt exquiſite workmanſhip and ſkill, and the moſt conſummate harmony and proportion of parts, but which, at the ſame time, had not a ſingle being in it that enjoyed pleaſure, or that could perceive its beauty?——Such an univerſe would be equivalent to juſt nothing *.

But

* See *Wiſdom the firſt Spring of Action in the Deity*, by Mr. Grove.

But while we thus find it neceſſary to conclude, that *Goodneſs* is the principle from which the Deity created; we ought, in honour to it, never to forget, that it is a principle founded in *reaſon*, and guided by *reaſon*, and eſſentially *free* in all its operations. Were not this true of it, or were it a mere phyſical propenſity in the divine nature which has no foundation in reaſon and wiſdom, and which, from the ſame neceſſity by which the divine nature is eternal or omnipreſent, produces all its effects, we could perceive no moral worth in it, nor reckon it at all an object of gratitude and praiſe.

Happineſs is the *end*, and the *only* end conceivable by us, of God's providence and government: But he purſues this end in ſubordination to rectitude, and by thoſe methods only which rectitude requires. *Juſtice* and *Veracity* are *right* as well as *goodneſs*, and muſt alſo be aſcribed to the Deity. —By *juſtice* here I mean principally *diſtributive juſtice*, impartiality and equity in determining the ſtates of beings, and a conſtant regard to their different moral qualifications in all the communications of happineſs to them. 'Tis this attribute of the Deity

Deity we mean, when we ſpeak of his ſpotleſs holineſs and purity. From hence ariſes the everlaſting repugnancy of his nature to all immorality, his loving and favouring virtue, and making it the unchangeable law of his creation, and the univerſal ground and condition of happineſs under his government.—It would, I think, be a very dangerous error to conſider goodneſs in God as undirected by juſtice in its exerciſe. *Divine benevolence* is a diſpoſition, not to make all indiſcriminately happy in any poſſible way, but to make the *faithful*, the *pious*, and *upright* happy.

That *juſtice* is not merely a mode of goodneſs, or an inſtance of its taking the moſt effectual method to accompliſh its end; or that the *whole* reaſon why God favours virtue and puniſhes vice, is not their contrary effects on the welfare of the world, I have endeavoured particularly to ſhew in the fourth chapter, where I treated of good and ill deſert *.

* "Some men ſeem to think the only character "of the author of nature to be that of ſimple ab- "ſolute benevolence. This, conſidered as a principle "of action and infinite, is a diſpoſition to produce the "greateſt

Again; *Veracity* is another principle of rectitude, not reducible to goodneſs, which directs the actions of the Deity, and by which all the exertions of his goodneſs are conducted and regulated.

There is nothing unreaſonable in believing it poſſible, that falſhood and deceit may frequently have equal aptitude to produce happineſs with truth and faithfulneſs. Suppoſing then this ſhould, in any circumſtances of the world, happen, 'tis ſurely not to be doubted but that God would prefer the latter. If this is denied; if it is indeed true, that, excluſive of conſequences, there is nothing right in the one, or wrong in the other, what can we depend on? How ſhall we know that God has not actually choſen the methods of falſhood and general deception? Great muſt be our perplexity, if we are to wait for a ſatisfactory ſolution of

" greateſt happineſs without regard to perſons beha-
" viour, otherwiſe than as ſuch regard would produce
" higher degrees of it. And ſuppoſing this to be the
" only character of God, veracity and juſtice in him
" would be nothing but benevolence conducted by
" wiſdom. Now ſurely this ought not to be aſſerted
" unleſs it can be proved, for we ſhould ſpeak with
" cautious reverence upon ſuch a ſubject." See *Butler's Analogy*, Part I. Chap. iii.

of ſuch doubts, till we can make out, that ſuch are the circumſtances of our ſtate and of the world, that it can never be equally advantageous to us to deceive us; eſpecially, as experience ſhews us in numberleſs inſtances, that an end may be obtained, and often moſt expeditiouſly and effectually, by deviating from truth.

But, though we are thus to conceive of God as *juſt* and *true*, as well as *good*; *juſtice* and *truth*, 'tis manifeſt could never engage him to create. They ſuppoſe beings actually exiſting endowed with reaſon and moral capacities, and ſignify a certain manner of acting towards them, or the methods in which their happineſs is to be purſued.

It is, beſides, rather properer to ſay, that they *direct*, than that they *limit* God's goodneſs; for they are by no means inconſiſtent with unlimited communications of happineſs, or the exerciſe of *everlaſting*, and *infinite beneficence*.

It will not be amiſs farther to obſerve, though there may be no great occaſion for it, that, from the manner in which I have all along expreſſed myſelf, a careful reader may eaſily ſee, that I am not guilty of an inconſiſtency in denying that the moral at-

tributes of God are resolvable into benevolence, at the same time that I affirm happiness to be the end, and, in all probability, the *only* end, for which he created and governs the world.—Happiness is the end of his government; but it is happiness, I have said, in subordination to rectitude: 'Tis the happiness of the *virtuous* and *worthy*, preferably to that of others: 'Tis happiness obtained, not in *any* way, but consistently with justice and veracity.—In a word; we may admit that goodness comprehends the whole divine moral character, provided we understand by it *a reasonable, sincere, holy, and just goodness.*

Finally; it is necessary for us, on this occasion, to recollect, that though it be proper, and often unavoidable, to speak of goodness, justice, and veracity, as *different* attributes of the Deity; yet they are different only as they are different views, effects, or manifestations of one supreme principle, which includes the whole of moral perfection; namely, *everlasting rectitude*, or *reason*. These reflexions shall suffice on the character of the Deity.

I shall

I ſhall now proceed, in the ſame manner, to examine the other principles and facts of Natural Religion; and to point out the peculiar evidences for them, ariſing from the account I have given of the nature and foundation of morals.

In the moral character of God, as it has been juſt explained and proved, is clearly implied his moral government; or that he requires all his reaſonable creatures to practiſe virtue, and connects with it the effects of his benevolence.—Between the actions and characters of reaſonable beings there is a real moral difference. This difference, he who knows all things, muſt know perfectly and completely. GOOD actions and GOOD characters he muſt regard as ſuch. To regard them as ſuch is to *approve* them; and to *approve* them is to be diſpoſed to *favour* them.—Evil actions and evil characters, on the contrary, he muſt perceive to be evil; that is, he muſt *diſapprove* them, and be diſpoſed to diſcountenance them. 'Tis contradictory then to think, that the evil and the good are equally the objects of his benevolent regard; and moſt unreaſonable to doubt, whether they will be differently treated by him.—As ſure as it is that

God knows what virtue and vice are; ſo ſure is it that he delights in the one, and forbids the other; and that he will regulate all his diſtributions of good by the reſpective degrees of them in his creatures. What is *lovely* and of good deſert, he cannot but *love* and diſtinguiſh. What is hateful and of ill deſert, he cannot but be diſpleaſed with and puniſh. 'Tis ſelf-evident that virtue *ought* to be happier than vice; and we may be very confident, that what *ought to be*, the univerſal, governing mind will take care *ſhall be*. If the ſtate of the world, and of every individual in it, is determined invariably according to *right*, and it is one principle of rectitude, "that all be-"ings ſhould receive according to their "works;" we may be aſſured that no events or facts contradictory to this, can ever take place in the world.

All this will be confirmed and illuſtrated, if we conſider how reaſonable it is to think, that it muſt be acceptable to God, that his intelligent creatures ſhould direct *their* actions by thoſe rules of goodneſs, juſtice, and righteouſneſs, by which he directs *his* actions. In truth it cannot be leſs neceſſary, that he ſhould require his

his *ſubjects* and *children* to do what is right, than it is that he ſhould *himſelf* do what is right. The *law of truth* muſt be the *law of the God of truth*. Thoſe duties which ariſe from the relations in which he has placed us, it muſt be his will that we ſhould diſcharge. Thoſe moral differences and obligations, which have their foundation in his nature, cannot be counteracted without counteracting his nature. And ſo far as we have contracted habits of vice, ſo far have we eſtabliſhed in our natures a contrariety to his nature, and alienated ourſelves from the fountain of good.—What can be plainer than this? What may we not queſtion, if we can queſtion, whether God is pleaſed to ſee his creatures carrying on the ſame end which he carries on, acting by the ſame rule, and conforming themſelves to the dictates of that reaſon of which he is himſelf the eternal ſource? Muſt he not have a particular complacency in thoſe who bear his own image? And is it poſſible that he ſhould not diſtinguiſh them from others? Or is it conceivable that he will permit any to be happy in a courſe of oppoſition to him; or to ſuffer by endeavouring, in the

beſt manner they can, to obey and reſemble him?

In ſhort, if there is an intelligent Being at the head of all, who made things what they are; if moral good and evil are real and immutable differences, and not mere names and fancies; if there is a law of righteouſneſs which the Deity regards, and according to which he always acts; if virtue deſerves well, and is eſſentially *worthy* of encouragement, and vice deſerves ill, and is a proper object of puniſhment; then, it may be depended on that the lots of the virtuous and vicious will be different; that God is *for* the one, and *againſt* the other; or, that the adminiſtration of the world is ſtrictly moral and righteous.

This concluſion might be farther proved, from the conſideration of the contrary effects virtue and vice neceſſarily have on the ſtate of the world. Virtue, by the nature of it, tends to promote order and bliſs; vice is directly ſubverſive of theſe. *Goodneſs*, therefore, joins with *juſtice* in requiring, that the one ſhould univerſally and for ever be encouraged under the divine government, and the other diſcouraged and puniſhed.

Let

Let it now be carefully conſidered here, that if it ſhould appear, that, in the preſent world, virtue and vice are not diſtinguiſhed in the manner which theſe obſervations require; the unavoidable conſequence muſt be, that "there is a future ſtate."—How this matter ſtands, and wherein the force of this inference lies, are points which deſerve particular examination.

On the one hand, it muſt be granted, that, in general, virtue is the *preſent* good, and vice the *preſent* ill of men; and that we ſee enough in the preſent ſtate, without having recourſe to any abſtract arguments, to ſatisfy us that the Deity favours the virtuous, and to point out to us the beginnings of a moral government.—But, on the other hand, it is no leſs evident, that we now perceive *but* the beginnings of ſuch a government; that it is by no means carried ſo far as we have reaſon to expect.

Virtue *tends* to produce much greater happineſs than it now actually produces, and vice to produce much greater miſery. Theſe contrary tendencies neither do nor can, during the ſhort period of this life, in any

any inſtance, produce their full effects; and often they are prevented from taking the effect they *might*, and generally *do* take, by many obſtacles ariſing from the wickedneſs of mankind, and other cauſes of a kind plainly temporary, and which cannot be reckoned natural or neceſſary. How reaſonably may we preſume, that tendencies thus interrupted and oppoſed, and yet ſo inſeparable from virtue and vice, and ſo eſſential to the conſtitution of things, will, ſome time or other, iſſue in their genuine effects?—Do they not declare to us evidently the *purpoſe* of him who made the world what it is? And can we think, this purpoſe will be defeated?

Though virtue always tends to happineſs, and though it is the nature of it to advance our happineſs and to better our condition, in proportion to the degree in which we poſſeſs it; yet ſuch is the ſtate of things here below, that the event ſometimes proves otherwiſe. 'Tis impoſſible to ſurvey the world, or to recollect the hiſtory of it, without being convinced of this. There is not the leaſt probability, that all men are conſtantly and invariably more or leſs happy,

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as they are more or leſs conſcientious and upright. How often has virtue been oppreſſed and perſecuted, while vice has proſpered and flouriſhed? Good men may have a diſpoſition to an unreaſonable and perplexing ſcrupuloſity, or to lowneſs of ſpirits and melancholy, and in conſequence of this may be rendered ignorant of their own characters, and live in perpetual diſtruſt and terror: or they may entertain ſuch falſe notions of religion and the Deity, as may give them great trouble, and take away from them many of the joys that would otherwiſe have attended their integrity. And are ſuch men; or others, who, perhaps, through the faults of their parents or thoſe of their education, carry about with them diſeaſed bodies, and languiſh away life under pain and ſickneſs; or who are harraſſed and defamed for their virtue, driven away from all that is dear to them, and obliged to ſpend their days in poverty, or in an *inquiſition*; are theſe perſons, equally happy with many others, who, though not *more* virtuous, may nevertheleſs be exempted from all ſuch trials? Or, indeed, are they equally happy with many vicious perſons, who ſwim with the current of the world; com-

ply

ply with its cuſtoms; deny themſelves nothing they can procure conſiſtently with a good name; are caſt into the moſt affluent circumſtances; enjoy health and vigour of body, and tempers naturally eaſy and gay; live in a ſtate of habitual thoughtleſſneſs about what may happen to them hereafter, or entertain opinions that fill them with falſe hopes; and at laſt die without concern or remorſe? Have there *never* been any inſtances of this kind? Does it *never* happen, that the very honeſty of perſons ſubjects them to peculiar difficulties and inconveniencies, at the ſame time that prevarication and diſhoneſty make their way to eaſe, and honour, and plenty?

Indeed, all things conſidered, this world appears fitted more to be a ſchool for the *education* of virtue, than a ſtation of honour to it; and the courſe of human affairs is favourable to it more by *exerciſing* it, than by *rewarding* it. Though, in equal circumſtances, it has always greatly the advantage over vice, and is alone ſufficient to overbalance many and great inconveniences; yet it would be very extravagant to pretend, that it is at preſent completely, and without

excep-

exception, its own happineſs; that it is alone ſufficient to overbalance *all poſſible* evils of body, mind, and eſtate; or that, for example, a man who, by *baſe* but *private* methods, has ſecured a good eſtate, and afterwards enjoys it for many years with diſcretion and credit, has leſs pleaſure than another, who, by his benevolence or integrity, has brought himſelf to a dungeon or ſtake, or who lives in perplexity, labour, ſelf-denial, torture of body, and melancholy of mind. It may, 'tis true, be juſtly ſaid, that virtue, though in the moſt diſtreſſed circumſtances, is preferable to vice in the moſt proſperous, and that expiring in flames ought to be choſen, rather than the greateſt wages of iniquity *. But the meaning of this is not, that

* No one can think this aſſertion in any degree inconſiſtent or extravagant, who does not hold that virtue is good and eligible and obligatory, only as the means of private pleaſure; and that nothing elſe can be an object of deſire and preference. Upon this ſuppoſition, indeed, the very notion of parting with life, or of reſigning an enjoyment to preſerve innocence, and for the ſake of virtue, would imply a contradiction. For being *obliged* to nothing, and therefore nothing being our *duty*, but that by which we ſhall obtain ſome overbalance of pleaſure; what would otherwiſe have been *right* becomes *wrong*, when we are to be, in any meaſure,

that virtue in ſuch circumſtances is more *profitable* than vice (or attended with more pleaſure) but that it is of *intrinſick* excellence and obligation; that it is to be choſen for itſelf, independently of its utility; and remains deſirable and amiable above all other objects, when ſtripped of every emolument, and in the greateſt degree afflicted and oppreſſed.

What has been laſt ſaid leads us to a farther obſervation on the ſtate of virtue and vice in the preſent world, which deſerves particular notice; and that is, that the moſt worthy characters are ſo far, in the preſent ſtate of things, from *always* enjoying the higheſt happineſs, that they are *ſometimes* the greateſt ſufferers; and the *moſt* vicious the *leaſt* unhappy. A perſon who ſacrifices his life, rather than violate his conſcience, or betray his country, gives up all poſſibility of any preſent reward, and loſes the more in proportion as his virtue is more glorious.

But,

ſure, loſers by it. So that, on theſe principles, it would be not *virtue* or *duty*, but *vice* and *guilt*, for a man to conſent to give up one hour's life, or the *leaſt* degree of preſent enjoyment, to procure the greateſt bleſſings for all mankind, ſuppoſing no future ſtate. See chap. VI. page 174, &c.

But, in the *ordinary courſe* of life, there are circumſtances which ſubject the beſt men to ſufferings, to which all others muſt be ſtrangers. The greater their virtue is, the higher ideas they have of virtue, and the more difficult 'tis for them to attain to that degree of it they wiſh for; the more anxiety they feel about the ſtate of their own characters; the more concerned they muſt be for paſt miſcarriages; the more ſenſible of their own imperfections; the more ſcrupulous and tender their conſciences are, and the more ſuſceptible of diſtreſs from the ſmalleſt deviations. For this reaſon it may, I believe, be ſafely ſaid, that the *infirmities* of ſome of the beſt men often give them more uneaſineſs, than the indulged *vices* of *ſome* wicked men. Be this however as it will, it can ſcarcely be denied with reſpect to wickedneſs, that it would very frequently be much better for a man, (I mean, more for his own preſent eaſe) to be *thoroughly* wicked than *partially* ſo. A man who loves virtue without uniformly practiſing it, who poſſeſſes many good diſpoſitions, and is ſufficiently convinced of the danger and malignity of all vice to cauſe him heartily to deteſt it, and, *in ſome inſtances*, to

to avoid it, but not enough to prevent his being, *in other inſtances*, driven by unconquered deſires into the commiſſion of it; ſuch a perſon muſt doubtleſs be very miſerable. He poſſeſſes neither virtue nor vice enough to give him any quiet. He is the ſeat of a conſtant inteſtine war, always full of vexation with himſelf, and torn and diſtracted between contending paſſions. 'Till reaſon is effectually ſubdued, it will be on all occaſions endeavouring to regain its throne, and raiſing inſurrections and tumults. The greater power it retains, where it is not ſuffered to govern, the greater diſturbances it muſt produce, and the ſeverer torments it muſt inflict.

'Tis worth adding, that in much the ſame condition with this now deſcribed is a vicious perſon, during the firſt period of his reformation. The pangs of remorſe and ſelf-reproach, the laſhes of an awakened conſcience, and the painful ſtruggles with evil habits and paſſions yet craving and violent, cannot but for ſome time give him unſpeakable trouble, and prevent his experiencing the peace and happineſs naturally reſulting from virtue: And if we ſuppoſe him taken away from life before he has com-

completed what he has begun and attained a ſettled virtuous character; it will be true of him, that he has only been more miſerable for his change: And yet, ſurely, for every thing good in a man, it is fit he ſhould be a gainer rather than a ſufferer.

If now, on the other hand, we conſider the condition of the obſtinately and thoroughly vicious, we ſhall find it very different. The more the power of reaſon within them is weakened, the leſs troubleſome it muſt prove. The nearer they are to being paſt feeling, the leſs they muſt feel. And, in general, we may obſerve, that the *moſt* wicked endure the *leaſt* uneaſineſs from the checks of conſcience, attend the leaſt to moral and religious conſiderations, are leaſt ſenſible of ſhame and infamy, practiſe moſt readily and effectually the arts of ſelf-deceit, and thus may eſcape many of the ſharpeſt miſeries of vice, which, had they been leſs obdurate, they muſt have ſuffered.

Do not ſuch obſervations point out to us a future ſtate, and prove this life to be connected with another? Shall we, rather than receive this concluſion, retreat to *Atheiſm*, and deny that a being *perfectly rea-*

ſonable governs all things? Or muſt we maintain that it does not follow from his being himſelf righteous, that he approves and will ſupport righteouſneſs, and diſtinguiſh between thoſe who do his will and imitate his goodneſs, and thoſe who do not? If nothing is to be expected beyond this world, no ſuitable proviſion is made for many different caſes amongſt men; no remarkable manifeſtation is ſeen of the divine holineſs; and the moſt noble and excellent of all objects, that on which the welfare of the creation depends, and which raiſes beings to the neareſt reſemblance of the Deity, ſeems to be left without any adequate ſupport. Is this poſſible under the *Divine* government? Can it be conceived, that the wiſdom and equity of providence ſhould fail only in the inſtance of virtue? That here, where we ſhould expect the exacteſt order, there ſhould be the leaſt?—But, acknowledge the reference of this ſcene to a future more important ſcene, and all is clear; every difficulty is removed, and every irregularity vaniſhes. A plain account offers itſelf of all the ſtrange phænomena in human life. 'Tis of little conſequence, how much at any time virtue ſuffers and vice triumphs *here*,

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if *hereafter* there is to be a juſt diſtinction between them, and every inequality is to be ſet right. Nay, it may be *ſometimes* proper, that a vicious man ſhould be permitted to enjoy the world; and alſo that a good man ſhould be ſuffered to ſtruggle with difficulties; which may very well happen, at the ſame time, that God leaves not himſelf without abundant witneſs to the reaſon of our minds and in the *general* courſe of events, and the frame of our natures, of his perfectly righteous diſpoſition and character.

A moral plan of government muſt be carried into execution gradually and ſlowly through ſeveral ſucceſſive ſteps and periods. Before retribution there muſt be probation and diſcipline. Rewards and puniſhments require, that, antecedently to them, ſufficient opportunities ſhould be given to beings to render themſelves proper objects of them, and to form and diſplay their characters; during which time it is neceſſary that one event ſhould often happen to the good and the bad. Were every ſingle action, as ſoon as performed, to be followed with its proper reward or puniſhment; were wickedneſs, in every inſtance of it, ſtruck with *immediate* vengeance, and were goodneſs al-

ways at eaſe and proſperous; the characters of men could not be formed; virtue would be rendered intereſted and mercenary; ſome of the moſt important branches of it could not be practiſed; adverſity, frequently its beſt friend, could never find acceſs to it; and all thoſe trials would be removed which are requiſite to train it up to maturity and perfection. Thus, would the regular proceſs of a moral government be diſturbed, and its purpoſes defeated; and therefore, the very facts which are made objections to it, appear, as mankind are now conſtituted, to be required by it.—In a word; ſhall we, from preſent inequalities, draw concluſions ſubverſive of the moſt evident principles of reaſon, though we ſee the conſtitution of the world and the natural tendencies of things to be ſuch as will, if they are allowed time and ſcope for operating, neceſſarily exclude them? Is it reaſonable to give up the wiſdom and righteouſneſs of the univerſal mind, to contradict our cleareſt notions of things, and to acknowledge errors in the adminiſtration of the Deity, notwithſtanding innumerable appearances in the frame of the world of his infinite power and perfection, rather than receive a plain, eaſy,

eaſy, and natural ſuppoſition, which is ſuggeſted to us in innumerable ways, which mankind in all ages have received, and which is agreeable to all our beſt ſentiments and wiſhes?

No one would doubt, whether a piece of workmanſhip or production of art, ſuppoſed to be accidentally diſcovered and entirely new to us, was made for a particular uſe, provided the plan and ſtructure of it plainly anſwered to ſuch a uſe, and the ſuppoſition of this uſe of it explained every thing in it that would otherwiſe be diſproportioned and unaccountable, and made it appear throughout regular and beautiful. What would be more perverſe than obſtinately to deny that it was intended for ſuch a uſe; and, in conſequence of this, contrary to undeniable marks of the moſt maſterly hand in various parts of it, to maintain it to be the work of ſome bungling artiſt, who either had not *knowledge*, or not *power* enough to make it more perfect?

Again, how unreaſonable would it be to aſſert, that a particular paſſage in a book which ſeemed ſtrange to us, was *nonſenſe* or *blaſphemy*, when an obvious and natural ſenſe of it offered itſelf to us, which the

turn of the paſſage itſelf pointed out to us, and which rendered it of a piece with the wiſdom apparent in other parts of the book, and agreeable to what previouſly we had the beſt reaſon to believe concerning the character and abilities of the author?

I have thought it neceſſary to make theſe obſervations, with a particular view to thoſe who are fearful of allowing any thing * irregular

* I mean what *would be* irregular were this life unrelated to another. 'Tis an obvious truth, which 'tis ſtrange any ſhould overlook, that what is perfectly right and juſt, when conſidered in its relations to *the whole* to which it belongs, may be quite otherwiſe, when conſidered by itſelf, and as a detached part.

It ought to be remembered, that the obſervations made above prove nothing concerning the *nature* of the future ſtate, except that, in general, it will be a ſtate in which the retribution begun in this life will be rendered adequate. But it is very plain this may happen, and yet all mankind periſh at laſt. Reaſon, therefore, leaves us much in the dark on this ſubject. We are ſure of no more than that it ſhall, on the whole, be *better* or *worſe* for every perſon in proportion as he has been morally better or worſe in his conduct and character. But what, *in particular*, will be the different lots of the virtuous and vicious hereafter, we cannot tell. The higheſt human virtue is very defective, and were we to receive no more on the account of it than we could claim from diſtributive juſtice,

regular in the preſent diſtribution of happineſs and miſery, from an apprehenſion that

tice, our expectations would be very low. A ſhort period hereafter would ſettle our account, and completely vindicate the ways of Providence.—Many who are now virtuous may formerly have been great offenders; and it is by no means clear how far repentance muſt be available to break the connection eſtabliſhed between ſin and puniſhment, or what peculiar treatment the caſes of *penitents*, as diſtinguiſhed from *innocents*, may require under the divine government.—Every perſon, I fancy, who is truly contrite for the miſcarriages of his paſt life is likely to feel the force of theſe obſervations. The conſciouſneſs which he muſt have of his own demerit, would ſcarcely ſuffer him to uſe any other prayer than that of the Prodigal in the parable, *I have ſinned, O father, againſt heaven and in thy ſight, and am no more worthy to be called* thy ſon. *Make me as one of thy* hired ſervants. —Here, I think, the information given us by the CHRISTIAN REVELATION comes in for our relief moſt ſeaſonably and happily. It acquaints us that the return of every man to his duty ſhall reſtore him, not merely to ſome lower place in God's family, but to all thoſe privileges of a *ſon* which he had forfeited, break the whole connection between ſin and puniſhment, and iſſue in full favour and everlaſting glory through that great MESSIAH *who loved us and gave himſelf for us.* To this *Meſſiah* the ſcriptures tell us the preſent ſtate has, from the firſt, ſtood in a particular relation, and had it not been for this relation our ſtate might perhaps have been ſo ordered, that adequate retribution ſhould have taken place

even

that the conſequence muſt be our wanting ſufficient evidence for a perfect order in nature, and for the wiſdom and equity of providence. It would, indeed, be ſcarcely poſſible to avoid Atheiſm were the aſſertions of ſome writers on this ſubject true.—Thus, ſhould it be aſked, why, from a view of what lies before us of the conſtitution and order of the divine government, we may not gather what will take place hereafter under it, as well as we may in many other caſes collect what is unknown from what is known, (infer, for inſtance, the whole meaning of a perſon

even here, and all mankind ſink in death, without the hope or poſſibility of a reſurrection.—That we are to be delivered at all from death to a new life of any kind may, therefore, be owing to JESUS CHRIST, conſiſtently with the argument for a future ſtate on which I have inſiſted. But that we are to be delivered from death to a new life that ſhall *never* end of *complete* happineſs, this is unſpeakably more than any arguments from diſtributive juſtice can teach us to expect; and we may well acquieſce in the ſcripture doctrine concerning it, and conſider our whole future exiſtence as derived under God's goodneſs, from the benevolent agency of that SAVIOUR, who came into the world that all the truly virtuous might not *not only have life, but have it more abundantly*. John x. 10.—The beſt account I can give of this ſubject may be found in my Sermons on the Chriſtian Doctrine.

a perſon from hearing only a part of what he ſaid) it would be replied, that in the laſt caſe our inference would be founded on a previous acquaintance with the ſpeaker, with language, and the general manner in which men uſe it to expreſs their ſentiments; that, independent of ſuch acquaintance, ſuppoſing we underſtood the meaning of the particular words we heard, we could not infer any thing from them beyond the ideas they immediately conveyed, or ſee the leaſt reaſon to ſuſpect any further intention in the ſpeaker; and that, in like manner, having no previous acquaintance with the divine nature and government, we can know nothing more concerning them than is directly ſignified to us by the ſtate of things about us; there can be no reaſon to think any order prevails in the creation greater than we at the preſent moment obſerve, or to conclude that the firſt cauſe poſſeſſes any powers and qualities in a higher degree than they are actually exhibited to us in what falls under our notice of his works. Nay, as antecedently to experience, we could not frame any notion, upon hearing particular articulate ſounds, of a *ſpeaker*, or of any ideas ſignified by them, or indeed know any thing

thing further than that we were conſcious of ſuch and ſuch particular impreſſions; ſo likewiſe with reſpect to this viſible univerſe, it might be ſaid, (and much the ſame * has been ſaid) that being an object *wholly ſingular* to us, we cannot draw any concluſions from it, or determine any thing concerning the nature, deſigns, and properties of its *cauſe*, or even know that it has a *cauſe*.

This is the upſhot of the principles I have in view. But ſuch objections can have no effect on one, who doubts not but that an account very different from that on which theſe difficulties are founded, is to be given of the operations of our minds; and that the human underſtanding, however it may be preceded by ſenſible impreſſions, and be ſupplied by them with the firſt *occaſions* of exerting itſelf, is a faculty infinitely ſuperior to all the powers of ſenſe, and a moſt important ſource of our ideas, by means of which we can,† independently of experience, demonſtrate innumerable truths concerning many

* See the *Eſſay on a particular providence and future ſtate*, in Mr. Hume's *Philoſophical Eſſays*.

† See Chap. I. Sect. II.

many objects, of which otherwise we must have been for ever ignorant.—'Tis the peculiar advantage of the principles I have maintained, that they furnish us with direct and demonstrative proofs of the *truths of natural religion*, and particularly of the *righteousness and goodness of God*; at the same time, that they aid and support all reasonings *a posteriori*.

I shall conclude this chapter, with mentioning one further use which may be made of the principles maintained in this treatise. We may learn from them, in the clearest manner, "the great importance of virtue, "and evil of vice." Every part of the account I have given of morals has a tendency to teach us this.

I wish I could here obtain the reader's attention, and engage him to recollect carefully the nature of virtue and vice according to the account I have given of them, and to consider the following general and summary account of the *importance* of the one, and the *evil* of the other.

VIRTUE is of *intrinsick* value and good desert, and of indispensible obligation; not the *creature of will*, but *necessary* and *immutable*;

mutable; not *local* or *temporary*, but of equal *extent* and *antiquity* with the DIVINE MIND; not a *mode of* SENSATION, but *everlasting* TRUTH; not *dependent on power*, but the *guide of all power*. It has been the principal design of this treatise to prove these assertions.—But farther; VIRTUE is the foundation of honour and esteem, and the source of all beauty, order, and happiness in nature. It is what confers value on all the other endowments and qualities of a reasonable being, to which they ought to be absolutely subservient, and without which the more eminent they are, the more hideous deformities and the greater curses they become. The use of it is not confined to any one stage of our existence, or to any particular situation we can be in, but reaches through all the periods and circumstances of our beings.—Many of the endowments and talents we now possess, and of which we are too apt to be proud, will cease entirely with the *present state*; but this will be our ornament and dignity in *every future state* to which we may be removed. *Beauty* and *wit* will die, *learning* will vanish away, and all the *arts of life* be soon forgot; but *virtue* will remain for ever. This unites us to the whole rational

rational creation, and fits us for converſing with any order of ſuperior natures, and for a place in any part of God's works. It procures us the approbation and love of all wiſe and good beings, and renders them our allies and friends.—But what is of unſpeakably greater conſequence is, that it makes God our friend, aſſimilates and unites our minds to his, and engages his almighty power in our defence.—Superior beings of all ranks are bound by it no leſs than ourſelves. It has the ſame authority in all worlds that it has in this. The further any being is advanced in excellence and perfection, the greater is his attachment to it, and the more is he under its influence.—To ſay no more; 'tis the LAW of the whole univerſe; it ſtands firſt in the eſtimation of the Deity; its original is his nature; and it is the very object that makes him lovely.

Such is the importance of VIRTUE.—Of what conſequence, therefore, is it that we practiſe it?—There is no argument or motive which is at all fitted to influence a reaſonable mind, which does not call us to this. One virtuous diſpoſition of ſoul is preferable to the greateſt natural accompliſhments and abilities, and of more value than

than all the treaſures of the world. — If you are wiſe then, ſtudy virtue, and contemn every thing that can come in competition with it. Remember, that nothing elſe deſerves one anxious thought or wiſh. Remember, that this alone is honour, glory, wealth, and happineſs. Secure this, and you ſecure *every thing*. Loſe this, and *all* is loſt.

But let us next conſider *Vice*. To the ſame degree that *Virtue* is *important and amiable*, this is *evil and deteſtable*. 'Tis of eſſential malignity and ill-deſert, the only real object of cenſure and blame, and the ſource of all evils. Other evils, ſuch as diſeaſes, poverty, loſſes, and calumny, affect only what is external and foreign to us; but they need not diſturb our minds, or do the leaſt injury to what is truly *ourſelves*. But vice pierces and wounds, and lays waſte *ourſelves*. It hurts not the *body*, the *reputation*, or *fortune*, but the *man*; and plants anguiſh, uproar, and *death* in the ſoul itſelf. —Other evils may in the end prove to be benefits to us, but this is eternally and unchangeably evil; the bane of every heart into which it enters; the ruin of all who do not

not in time reſcue themſelves from its dominion; and the ſting and miſery in whatever elſe afflicts us.—'Tis impoſſible to conceive what it is to ſet up *our own wills* againſt *Reaſon* and the *Divine will*, to violate the order of the world, and depart from that law which governs all things, and by which the Deity acts. There is no object in nature ſo monſtrous as a reaſonable being defiled with guilt, living in contradiction to the remonſtrances of his underſtanding, trampling on the authority of God, and oppoſing himſelf to the obligations of truth and righteouſneſs.

But nothing is fitted to give us a deeper ſenſe of the dreadful nature of vice, than to conſider what would be its conſequences, were it to become prevalent through the creation.—Into how dreadful a ſtate of anarchy would this convert a fair and happy univerſe? How ſoon would it blaſt the whole beauty of God's works, and involve all nature in deſolation and ruin?—*Every inſtance* of moral evil is a *tendency* to this. It is that *begun* which carried farther would iſſue in it.—We cannot, therefore, indulge an irregular deſire or wrong thought, without taking a ſtep towards all that is terrible,

and

and contributing towards defacing the creation, and over-turning all law, order, and bliſs.

What we thus, from the idea of vice, may ſee would be the effects of it, if univerſally prevalent, we find in ſome meaſure verified by fact. Into this world we know it has entered—and what havock has it made? How has it ſpread its malignant effects through all nations and lands? 'Tis not eaſy for a benevolent mind to bear this proſpect, or to take a particular view of that flood of diſaſter and woe, which vice has let in upon the human race.—From hence proceed unnumbered calamities and evils which are continually infeſting us, and mingling diſappointment, vexation, and bitterneſs with our enjoyments and comforts. This is the cruel enemy which renders men deſtructive to men; which racks the body with pain, and the mind with remorſe; which produces ſtrife, faction, revenge, oppreſſion, and ſedition; which embroils ſociety, kindles the flames of war, and erects inquiſitions; which takes away peace from life, and hope from death; which brought forth death at firſt, and has ever ſince cloathed it with all its terrors; which arms nature

ture and the God of nature againſt us; and againſt which it has been the buſineſs of all ages to find out proviſions and ſecurities, by various inſtitutions, laws, and forms of government.

But the effects of vice in the *preſent* world, however ſhocking, may be nothing compared with thoſe which may take place *hereafter*, when the evil and the good ſhall continue no longer blended; when the natural tendencies of things will be no more interrupted in their operation; when the moral conſtitution of the univerſe will be perfected, and every one receive according to what he deſerves. What the puniſhment will be which will then overtake vice, it may not be poſſible for us to imagine. When we ſeriouſly conſider what it is in its nature and tendency, we can hardly entertain too dreadful apprehenſions of the loſs we may ſuffer by it; or, be too anxious about removing all the remains of it from our tempers, and eſcaping to as great a diſtance as poſſible from the danger with which it threatens us.

THE

CONCLUSION.

HAVING completed my design in this work, I will close the whole with offering the following argument for the *practice* of virtue, which, I think deserves to be considered by all, and, particularly, by persons who are disposed to scepticism and infidelity.

In the last chapter I have given an account of some proofs of the principal facts of natural religion, particularly, of a perfect moral government in nature, and a future state of rewards and punishments. A great deal of other evidence there is, which it was out of my way to mention. Above all; the Christian revelation confirms to us whatever we can gather from reason on these subjects, and promises to the virtuous ETERNAL LIFE — A HAPPY IMMORTALITY.

I will,

I will, however, ſuppoſe the whole of this evidence to be ſo inſufficient as to leave only a chance, overbalanced by contrary chances, for *ſuch* a reward to virtue; and I aſſert that *ſtill* our obligations will be the ſame, and that it will be the moſt fooliſh conduct not to practiſe virtue, and even to ſacrifice to it all preſent advantages and gratifications.—For, let it be conſidered what any given chance for ſuch a good muſt be worth.

An even chance for any given ſtake is worth one half of that ſtake; and a chance for it, unfavourable in any proportion, is worth as much of it as is equivalent to that proportion. That is; if the chance is only a *third* or a *tenth* of all the chances, its value will be a *third* or a *tenth* of the whole ſtake. If, therefore, the good ſtaked is ſuppoſed to be the *future* reward of virtue, and its value is reckoned only equal to the value of all *preſent* good, it will be right to give up for it a *half*, a *third*, or a *tenth* of all preſent good, according as the chances *for* obtaining it are a *half*, *third* or *tenth* of all the chances *for* and *againſt* obtaining it.

If the value of the future reward of virtue is ſuppoſed *greater* than the value of all preſent good, it will be right to give up for it a proportionably greater part of preſent good; and the future good may be ſo great as to render *any* chance for it worth more than all that can be enjoyed in this life.—The ſame is true of the value of any means of avoiding a future evil. Though we ſuppoſe it improbable in any given degree, yet what ſaves us from the ſtill remaining danger of it may be worth, on account of its nature and magnitude, more than any thing that we can reſign or endure.

In other words. Any given chance for a given good is worth ſomewhat. The ſame chance for a greater good is worth more; and conſequently when the good is infinite the value of any chance for it muſt be likewiſe infinite. The future good then promiſed to virtue being infinite, and the loſs of it with which vice threatens us being an infinite evil, it follows that *any apprehenſion* that religion *may* be true, or the *bare poſſibility* of ſuch conſequences to follow virtue and vice as Chriſtianity has taught us to expect, lays us under the ſame obligation, with

with reſpect to practice, as if we were *aſſured* of its truth.

I muſt add, that though it ſhould be imagined that (through ſome ſtrange confuſion in the affairs of the world, or an extravagant mercy in God) by *vice* as well as by *virtue* we may ſtand a chance for happineſs hereafter; yet, if we will but allow that the one is in any reſpect more *likely* to obtain it than the other, it will ſtill be the greateſt madneſs not, at all adventures and the riſque of every thing, to adhere to the one, and avoid the other. For it is evident, that the ſmalleſt *improvement* of a chance to obtain a good, increaſes in value as the good increaſes, and becomes infinite when the good itſelf is infinite.

It is not, I think, poſſible for any one to avoid conviction in this inſtance, who will not aſſert that it is *certain* that Chriſtianity is falſe, and that there is *no* future ſtate; or that, if there is, virtue gives no better chance for happineſs in it than vice. It would be inconſiſtent in a ſceptic to aſſert this, and it may be preſumed that no man in his wits will aſſert it. Let it however be aſſerted; it would, even in this caſe, be no very great matter for a man to be ſo far diffident of

himſelf, as to uſe the precaution of living in ſuch a manner that if at laſt the worſt ſhould happen, and his confidence prove vain, he may have nothing to *fear*. But no degree of unbelief, ſhort of what riſes ſo high as this, can acquit a man from the imputation of folly unſpeakable, if he is looſe and careleſs in his life, or conſents at any time to any wrong action or omiſſion to ſave any thing he can enjoy, or to obtain any thing that can be offered to him in this world.

Indeed, whoever will fairly examine the evidences of religion, muſt ſee that they deſerve great regard.——He that will think how reaſonable it is to preſume, that *infinite goodneſs* will communicate *infinite happineſs*, and that the Creator of all deſigns his creatures for ſuch a happineſs, by continuing thoſe of them who are qualified for it in being for ever to improve under his eye and care, and that virtuous men, if any, have moſt reaſon to expect ſuch an effect of his favour: He that will reflect on the various determinations which have been given our minds in favour of virtue; the accountableneſs of our natures;

tures; our unavoidable preſaging fears and hopes; the malignant and deteſtable nature of vice as before repreſented; the general ſentiments of mankind on the ſubjects of a future ſtate and reckoning; and that *ſpotleſs holineſs* of the Deity, which the ſacred writings in the moſt ſtriking manner aſſert and diſplay, and ſome conviction of which naturally forces itſelf upon every one; he, I ſay, who will attend to all this, cannot well avoid entertaining uneaſy apprehenſions as to what may hereafter happen, and be led to conſider, with deep concern, how awful the future diſplays of divine juſtice *may* poſſibly prove, how greatly we may be concerned in the incomprehenſible ſcheme of providence, how much may depend on what we now are, and how very neceſſary it is that *by all means* we endeavour to ſecure ourſelves.—That ſome time or other preſent inequalities will be ſet right, and a greater difference made between the lots of the virtuous and vicious than is now viſible, we have a great deal to lead us to believe. And what kind or degree of difference the counſels and ends of the divine government may require, who can be ſure? We ſee enough in the preſent

ſtate of things, and ſufficiently experience what the government of the world admits of, to alarm our fears, and to ſet us upon conſidering ſeriouſly and anxiouſly, what greater diſtinctions between human beings than we now obſerve are likely in another ſtate to take place, and what greater happineſs or miſery than we now feel, or can have any ideas of, may await us in that future, *endleſs* duration, through which it is at leaſt credible that we are to exiſt.

But with however little regard ſome may be ready to treat ſuch conſiderations, it muſt be paſt diſpute among inquiſitive and impartial perſons, that all the arguments taken together, which have been uſed to prove natural and revealed religion, produce *ſome degree* of *real* evidence; and that, conſequently, they lay a ſufficient foundation for the preceding reaſoning.

To this reaſoning it becomes us the more to attend, becauſe it is that which we are continually uſing in the common courſe of life; and becauſe it explains to us the principles and grounds upon which we act in almoſt all our temporal concerns. "It * ought

* See *Butler's Analogy*, *Introduction*, page 4, and chap. vi. part II. page 343, the 4th edition.

" ought to be forced upon the reflexion of " ſceptical perſons, that ſuch is our nature " and condition, that they neceſſarily re- " quire us in the daily courſe of life to act " upon evidence much lower than what is " commonly called probable; and, that " there are numberleſs inſtances reſpecting " the common purſuits of life, where a " man would be thought in a literal ſenſe " diſtracted, who would not act, and with " great application too, not only on an " even chance, but on much leſs, and where " the probability was greatly againſt his " ſucceeding."

What precautions will men often uſe againſt the moſt diſtant and imaginary dangers?—Why will they neglect uſing an eaſy and reaſonable precaution againſt the *worſt* and *greateſt* of all dangers?—What eager and reſtleſs adventurers will they become, what pains will they take, and what riſques will they run, where there is any proſpect of acquiring money, power, or fame, objects in themſelves of little value, and which to deſpiſe would be our greateſt dignity and happineſs? Why then are they ſo unwilling to take any pains, or to run any riſques, in order to obtain bleſſings of *ineſtimable worth*,

worth, and to ſecure a chance for *eternal* bliſs? How ſtrange is it that they ſhould ſo little care to put themſelves in the way to win *this Prize*, and to become adventurers here, where even to fail would be glorious? When will the following truths, ſo intereſting and indiſputable, ſink deep enough into our hearts; "that by ſuch a courſe as "virtue and piety require, we can in general "loſe *nothing*, but *may* gain *infinitely*; and "that, on the contrary, by a careleſs ill-ſpent "life we can *get nothing*, or at beſt (happen what will) *next to nothing*, but may "*loſe infinitely?*"

This brings me to what cannot be omitted in the preſent argument without doing it great injuſtice. The reader has obſerved, that it has gone upon the ſuppoſition, that there is a very great probability againſt religion and a future retribution, and that virtue requires us to ſacrifice to it *all our* preſent enjoyments. The reverſe of both theſe ſuppoſitions appears in reality to be the truth. There is not only an *equal chance*, but a *great probability* for the truth of religion. There is nothing to be *got* by vice, but the beſt part of preſent good is commonly *loſt* by

by it. 'Tis not the *happineſs of life* that virtue requires us to give up; but our *follies*, *our diſeaſes*, and *miſeries*. What, according to this ſtate of the caſe, muſt we think of the folly of a vicious choice! How ſhocking is the infatuation which makes us capable of it?

APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

ADDITIONAL NOTES,

AND A

DISSERTATION

ON THE

BEING AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE DEITY.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.

P. 45. "In every idea is implied the *poſſibility* of the "exiſtence of its object, nothing being clearer "than that there can be no idea of an *impoſſibility*, or "conception of what *cannot* exiſt."

Dr. REID, in his very valuable work on the intellectual powers of man, conteſts this aſſertion. Eſſay 4th, Chap. iii. And his principal reaſons ſeem to be, that we can underſtand a *propoſition* which expreſſes what is impoſſible; and that we are often, in mathematical demonſtrations, directed to *ſuppoſe* what is impoſſible. But *ſuppoſing* and *conceiving* are not the ſame. There is no abſurdity which I may not be directed to *ſuppoſe*; but it does not follow from hence, that there is no abſurdity which I may not *conceive*. A believer in tranſubſtantiation may *ſuppoſe* that Chriſt held his body in his hand and gave it to his diſciples; but if he was to ſay that he had a clear and diſtinct conception of it, he would make himſelf as ridiculous as if he was to ſay he *ſaw* it.

A man may alſo underſtand what is meant by a propoſition which expreſſes an impoſſibility, as when it is ſaid that the whole is leſs than a part. But, certainly, he

he can have no real conception of this. He may alſo *think* that he has a clear *idea* of an object when he has it not, juſt as he may *think*, that he has a clear *perception* of an object when he does not perceive it. But as, in the latter caſe, he muſt believe the exiſtence of what he thinks he *perceives*; ſo, in the former caſe, he muſt believe the poſſibility of what he thinks he *conceives*. It ſhould be particularly conſidered here, that it is the *conception of objects* I have in view, and not the *underſtanding of propoſitions*; and that impoſſibilities, not being realities, conceptions of them would be conceptions of nothing.

NOTE B.

P. 46. "Matter is infinitely diviſible."

This is a property of matter which convinces me that I do not know what it is, and that the common ideas of it are extremely inadequate. The maxim of the ſchools, *omne ens eſt unum*, ſeems to me indiſputable. What can that be which is neither *one* thing, nor any *number* of things?

Is it abſurd to ſay, that one thing has moved another, and that another *in infinitum*, without any *firſt* mover? And is it not equally abſurd to ſay, that a particle of matter may be divided into other particles, and theſe into others *in infinitum* without ever coming to a particle that is properly *one*?

It is no ſolution of this difficulty to ſay that there are atoms which, having no pores, cannot be divided except by the power of the Creator. For ſuch an atom, conſiſting of parts, and there being a poſſibility that one part ſhould exiſt in one place, and another in another, it is, in reality, as much a multitude of atoms, as if they were

were actually separated. Whatever is really *one* cannot be divided without being annihilated. This is true of that being which every one calls *himself*. Half *himself* no one can conceive of.

Such are the difficulties which press my mind with respect to the nature of matter. They have, however, no effect on my belief of the existence of a material world. In this case, as in numberless other cases, I feel my own ignorance, without being led to reject convictions which I am forced to receive though not able to explain. I know my will moves my limbs. There is not any thing more familiar to me; nor, at the same time, is there any thing which I understand less.

NOTE C.

P. 55. "It should be observed, that I have all along "endeavoured to avoid speaking of an *idea* as an *image* "in the mind of the object we think of. A writer of "deep reflexion has charged this language with laying "the foundation of all modern scepticism. *See* Dr. "REID's *Enquiry into the human mind on the principles of* "*common Sense.*"

I am always mortified when I find, that my sentiments are different from those of the writer to whom I have now referred. Mr. HUME makes the immediate object of the mind in perception to be the same with perception itself, and thus annihilates all *external existence*. Dr. REID, if I understand him, asserts (in his Enquiry, *&c.* and also in his *Essays on the intellectual powers of man*) that there is no such object, and thus seems to me to annihilate all *perception*. When we investigate the properties of triangles or circles, are there not objects, independent of our minds, then *present* to them?

We call these objects, *ideas*. This word generally signifying the apprehension or conception of an object, it is improperly used to signify the object itself of conception; but the poverty of language obliging us to this, it must be excused; and care must be taken not to be misled by it, as I think Mr. HUME and some other writers have been.

In such instances we call, I have said, the objects present to our minds, *ideas*. If ideas have no existence, and *nothing* is present to our minds when we contemplate these objects, does it not follow that we then contemplate *nothing?* The same enquiry may be made with respect to our perception of *external* objects. These objects themselves not being present, if perceived, they must be perceived by *ideas* of them. Nor will it follow from hence, that we can have no assurance of the existence of external objects. All ideas imply the *possibility* of the existence of correspondent objects; and our belief of the *actual* existence of the objects of sense, we may resolve (as Dr. REID does) into impressions on our senses *forcing* belief at the moment of the impression, in a manner we cannot explain. And this may be done to more advantage on the supposition of ideas than without it. For scepticism seems to be less favoured by supposing that, in perception by our senses, there is *something* distinct from the mind and independent of it really perceived, than by supposing that there is nothing then perceived. It is unavoidable to enquire what this is? The Dissertation that follows these notes will shew how I am inclined to think on this subject. The truth is (if I mistake not) that the just answer to this enquiry would carry us higher than we are willing to go, and imply a presence of the Deity with us and dependence upon

him

him more close and constant and necessary, than we are apt to suspect or can easily believe.

NOTE D.

THE point which I have endeavoured to prove in the 3d section of the 1st chapter, appears to me, on reviewing it, to be so evident, that I am afraid I shall be thought by many persons to have *trifled* in this section, and *wasted* my time and attention. It is, indeed, in my opinion, a reproach to human reason that there should be any occasion for saying any thing to shew, that we express truth, and not merely an impression of pleasure or pain, when we say of certain actions that they are *right*, and of others that they are *wrong*.

After the publication of the former editions of this Treatise, Dr. SMITH (the author of the valuable work on the *wealth of nations*, and a writer above any praise from me) published his treatise, entitled, *The Theory of moral Sentiments*; the chief intention of which is to prove, that our perceptions of moral distinctions are derived from the same principle in our natures with that of *sympathy*; or that moral approbation and disapprobation are a species of fellow-feeling with moral agents, by which we are made to enter into their views and emotions and to participate in their pleasures and pains. But that our primary notions of moral good and evil are derived from sensation and not from reason, or that they are *feelings* of some kind or other, and not perceptions of the intellectual faculty, he represents as in his opinion so abundantly proved by Dr. HUTCHESON, as to make it a matter of wonder, that any controversy should be kept up about it. See *The Theory on moral Sentiments*, Part VI. Sect. 3. p. 399.

This opinion, thus delivered by ſo able a writer, would influence me more than it does, were it not for the contrary opinion of another writer no leſs able, and whoſe concurrence with me in all that is moſt important on this ſubject, gives me particular ſatisfaction. *See* Dr. REID's Eſſays on the intellectual powers of man, p. 728. At the concluſion of theſe Eſſays, Dr. REID intimates an intention to make the active and moral powers of man the ſubject of a future publication; and all enquiries after truth muſt wiſh, that nothing may prevent him from executing his purpoſe.

NOTE E.

P. 168, *&c.* I am forced to acknowledge that the obſervations here made on the grounds of our belief of the exiſtence of material objects, do not entirely ſatisfy me: I have, however, choſen to leave them as they were in the former editions of this Treatiſe, imagining that poſſibly they may give ſome aid to future enquirers. Thoſe who would be entertained as well as inſtructed by a particular diſcuſſion of this ſubject, and a full account of all the different theories and opinions concerning it, ſhould read the two firſt of Dr. REID's Eſſays on the intellectual powers of man.—Dr. *Reid's* own opinion ſeems to be, that the perception of external objects by our ſenſes, is "a *conception* of them, and a belief of their "preſent exiſtence made by our conſtitution to accom-"pany the impreſſions on our organs of ſenſe; and of "which no farther explanation can be given." It ſeems to me, that, in perception by our ſenſes, there is more than is here expreſſed. A conception of objects is often produced by impreſſions on the ſenſes, and accompanied with a belief of their preſent exiſtence, without any

any thing like an actual perception of them. But, whatever difficulties may attend this subject, it is certain, that the evidence of *ſenſe*, (like that of *memory*) will always maintain its authority; and it may be beſt, in theſe inſtances, to content ourſelves with feeling this, and to take our natures as they are, leſt by refining too much, and attempting to explain what is ſo clear as to be inexplicable, we ſhould only darken and perplex.

NOTE F.

On Mr. PALEY's Lectures on the principles of moral and political Philoſophy.

P. 393, *&c.* According to this writer, our notions of moral diſtinctions are derived, neither from *a moral ſenſe*, nor from *inſtinct* of any kind, nor from intellectual diſcernment and the natures of things. On the contrary; he makes them, if I underſtand him, to be a kind of habits of thinking (or prejudices) which we derive from education and the circumſtances in which we grow up to mature life. To be *obliged* to an action, he ſays, is "to be urged to it by a violent motive re-"ſulting from the command of another." P. 49. At the ſame time he aſſerts, that this motive can be only ſelf-love; and that we can be obliged to nothing that will not in ſome way contribute to our intereſt; (P. 51, 52.) ſo that (were there no future ſtate) an action by which we could *get* nothing would be perfectly indifferent to us; and, if it puts us to the ſmalleſt degree of pain, we ſhould be under an obligation to avoid it, tho' we could ſave by it a kingdom, or make a world happy. What makes the difference, he ſays, between *prudence* and *duty* is, that in the one caſe we conſider what we ſhall get or loſe in *this* world, and in the other what we ſhall get or loſe in a *future* world. A man, therefore,

who either does not believe in a future world, or who does not carry his views to it, can have no perception of duty? Mr. PALEY's definition of RIGHT is, "the "being conſiſtent with the will of God." P. 72. RECTITUDE, therefore, can be no guide to God's will itſelf; and to ſay that his will is a *righteous* will, is the ſame with ſaying that his will is his will, all that he wills to do being for that very reaſon right and fit. In ſhort, Mr. PALEY's theory of morals ſeems to be reſolvable into theſe two propoſitions; "that God's command is the meaſure "and ſtandard of all duty," and, "that the duty itſelf "of obeying his command is the neceſſity of obeying it "in order to avoid puniſhment."

Never indeed have I met with a theory of morals which has appeared to me more exceptionable; and when I think of it, I cannot wonder much at an aſſertion of Mr. *Paley*'s, which would, were it true, overthrow all public ſecurities depending on teſts and ſubſcriptions. I mean the aſſertion, that the declaration made by a clergyman on entering his office, that he unfeignedly aſſents to articles of faith framed on purpoſe to prevent a diverſity of opinions, (and containing the doctrines of the Trinity, predeſtination, original ſin, juſtification by faith alone, *&c.*) means no more than that he is neither a *papiſt*, a *baptiſt*, nor an *anti-epiſcopalian*.

I will take this opportunity to add, that of the ſame kind with this account of morals is the account which Mr. *Paley* gives of the principles of politics. "Civil "liberty (he ſays, p. 441.) is the not being reſtrained "by any laws except ſuch as do more good than harm, "or have a beneficial tendency;" and ſhould it be enquired, where is the power lodged of making laws and of judging of their tendency? he would anſwer, not in the people, for the right of legiſlation, according to him,

is

is not founded on the consent of the people, nor do civil rulers derive their authority from any compact between them and their people. He denies the existence of any such compact, whether *tacit* or *express*; and, in opposition to Mr. Locke's sentiments on this subject, maintains that civil authority derives it from the *Patriarchal* authority, and is the donation of the Deity collected (undoubtedly by civil governors themselves) from public expediency. Page 423.

There is likewise in these lectures a defence of standing armies, and of the inadequateness of our parliamentary representation. But what is most of all remarkable is, that, whereas Sir WILLIAM BLACKSTONE, Mr. LOCKE, MONTESQUIEU, &c. have made the essence of the British monarchical constitution to consist in the independency of the three states which compose it of one another: Mr. PALEY, on the contrary, asserts that since the retrenchment of prerogative at the revolution, the influence of the crown is become a necessary part of the constitution; and he concludes a chapter on this subject with saying, "that an independent parliament is incompatible with our monarchy."

I am very sensible of the merit of many parts of this work. But *these* parts of it I have read with surprize, and also with a concern, the pain of which has been much increased by the reflexion, that they contain principles which have been inculcated for many years at CAMBRIDGE, and which therefore probably have been imbibed by many young persons when under preparation for public life.

A

DISSERTATION

ON THE

BEING AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE DEITY.

IT is happy for us, that our conviction of all that is moſt intereſting to us is made to be the effect of immediate and irreſiſtible perception, and not left to depend on abſtruſe reaſonings and deductions. This is true, particularly, of our conviction of the exiſtence of a MAKER of the world. The doubts on this ſubject to which ſome have pretended, are derived from a ſophiſtry which is incapable of being ſeriouſly regarded, without contradicting thoſe principles of common ſenſe, which are our firſt and ſureſt and beſt guides, and which *will*, and always *muſt*, maintain their authority in oppoſition to all ſceptical refinements and ſubtleties. It is impoſſible to ſurvey the world without being aſſured, that the contrivance

trivance in it has proceeded from ſome contriver, the deſign in it from ſome *deſigning* cauſe, and the art it diſplays from ſome artiſt. To ſay the contrary, or to aſſert, that it was produced by the accidental falling together of its component parts, muſt appear to every man whoſe underſtanding is not perverted, a folly as groſs as it would be to aſſert the ſame of any other work of art that could be preſented to him; of a commodious houſe, of a fine picture, or an exquiſite machine.

In ſhort; this viſible univerſe, of which we are a part, is, *ſelf-evidently*, an exhibition of the power and wiſdom of a powerful and wiſe cauſe. It is alſo an exhibition of a *degree* of power and wiſdom which ſhews the cauſe to be powerful and wiſe beyond all we can conceive. This is the ſame to us with an *infinity* of theſe qualities in the Maker of the univerſe; and it obliges us to conclude, that the ſame wiſdom exiſts where we *cannot* ſee it as where we *can*, and to reckon with confidence that all appearances of irregularity are *appearances* only, rendered unavoidable by our ignorance and partial views; and which, were not this

true,

true, would imply a difficulty greater than any that now puzzles us, and not poſſible to be accounted for without ſuppoſing, that the world was framed by a wiſdom and foreſight not ſuperior to our own.

I will add, that the apprehenſions moſt natural to us, lead us to believe farther, that the firſt cauſe is ONE being; or at leaſt, that the diſtrict of nature which falls under our notice, is directed and governed by ONE COUNSEL; diſtracted counſels being always the effect of *imperfect* wiſdom, and incompatible with that conſummate and incomprehenſible wiſdom which the order of nature diſplays.

Theſe concluſions are ſufficient for all practical purpoſes. It is not, therefore, neceſſary to have recourſe to ſuch reaſonings as thoſe I am going to propoſe. The belief of one ſupreme ſuperintending cauſe and governor of all things, infinitely powerful wiſe and good, may be ſafely truſted to ſuch arguments *a poſteriori*, as thoſe to which I have now referred; and which have been often and excellently ſtated by many of the beſt writers. It cannot, however, be improper to ſhew how they are aided and confirmed

confirmed by a reaſoning of another kind which appears to me very important

The argument I have in view is the ſame with Dr. CLARKE's; but it will be a little differently repreſented, and purſued farther. Intimations of it have been given in ſeveral parts of the preceding work. I will here ſtate it more *diſtinctly*, but at the ſame time with as much brevity as poſſible, hoping that ſuch of my readers as may chuſe to follow me with their attention, will ſupply, from their own thoughts, what the particular imperfection of language in this inſtance may render me incapable of ſtating with ſufficient correctneſs and clearneſs.

The whole is an appeal to calm and patient reflexion, offered under a ſenſe of the high and abſtruſe and incomprehenſible nature of the ſubject of it.

PRO-

PROPOSITIONS *and* OBSERVATIONS *for explaining the* NECESSARY EXISTENCE *of the firſt Cauſe, and for demonſtrating by it his* PERFECTIONS.

THE exiſtence of all beings is either *contingent* or *neceſſary*.

All beings exiſt *contingently* whoſe non-exiſtence is *poſſible*; and the non-exiſtence of all beings is *poſſible*, whoſe non-exiſtence implies no contradiction.

Our own exiſtence and the exiſtence of the whole viſible world is *contingent*.

All that exiſts contingently; and which, therefore, might or might not have exiſted, requires a reaſon or cauſe of its exiſtence.

There muſt, therefore, be a cauſe of our own exiſtence and of the exiſtence of the world.

The cauſe of all that exiſts *contingently* muſt exiſt *neceſſarily*.

Thus

Thus far all the writers on the being and attributes of the Deity have agreed; but they have not, in my opinion, properly explained that *neceſſity* of exiſtence which belongs to the firſt cauſe. It is the attribute which forms the grand and fundamental diſtinction between him and all other beings; and which, when rightly underſtood, will be ſeen to imply all his other attributes. —I will, therefore, in the following obſervations, give as clear an account as I can of my ideas of it.

Firſt. The *neceſſity* of God's exiſtence is different from that *relative* and *conſequential* neceſſity which is expreſſed when we ſay, "that there muſt be a cauſe of every effect," and which, therefore, is only an *inference* from the exiſtence of effects.—In other words, the impoſſibility of not exiſting implied in the *neceſſity* of God's exiſtence is not an impoſſibility grounded upon or deduced from any facts or arguments, but an impoſſibility appearing *immediately*, and carrying its own evidence with it; an impoſſibility in the *nature of the thing itſelf*.—It is common to ſay, that it is *impoſſible* for God not to exiſt, and that he *cannot but* exiſt.

exiſt. But till this obſervation is attended to, it is ſaying nothing of particular importance on this ſubject. It is language that may be uſed without having the leaſt notion of the true nature of the neceſſity of the Divine exiſtence. From hence it follows, therefore,

Secondly, That the neceſſity of God's exiſtence implies that his non-exiſtence cannot be *conceived* without a contradiction. For were not this true, his non-exiſtence would be *poſſible*, every thing being ſo that is really conceivable, and which does not imply a contradiction.

Thirdly, The *neceſſity* of God's exiſtence implies that it is neceſſary, not merely as an efficient cauſe of other exiſtence, but to the very *conception* of all other exiſtence.—Were there any beings to the *conception* of whoſe exiſtence this being is not neceſſary, ſuch beings might be conceived to exiſt *alone*; that is, they might be conceived to exiſt *without* him, which is the ſame with conceiving him not to exiſt, and conſequently, with the *poſſibility* of his non-exiſtence. The conception of the *ſeparate* and *independent exiſtence* of any beings, is the ſame with the *conception* of the non-exiſtence of all other

other beings. Could we conceive this visible world to exiſt by itſelf; were there no conception of the neceſſary being required to the conception of its exiſtence; it would follow that there is no ſuch being. This itſelf would be conceiving his non-exiſtence. We can, for inſtance, very well conceive of *ſpace* and *time* without preſuppoſing, in that conception, the exiſtence of a *material world*; and this is conceiving it not to exiſt; and therefore, proves it to be contingent. And could we, in the ſame manner, conceive of the *material world* without *ſpace* and *time*, theſe themſelves likewiſe would appear to be contingent *.

There

* "What exiſts neceſſarily not only muſt ſo exiſt "alone as to be *independent* of any thing elſe; but (be- "ing *ſelf-ſufficient*) may alſo ſo exiſt *alone* as that every "thing elſe may *poſſibly* (or without any contradiction "in the natures of things) be ſuppoſed not to exiſt at "all; and conſequently (ſince that which may poſſibly "be ſuppoſed not to exiſt at all is not neceſſarily "exiſtent) no other thing can be neceſſarily exiſtent. "Whatever is neceſſarily exiſting there is need of its "exiſtence in order to the *ſuppoſal* of the exiſtence of "any other thing; ſo that nothing can poſſibly be ſup- "poſed to exiſt without preſuppoſing and including an- "tecedently the exiſtence of that which is neceſſary, "&c.

There can, therefore, be no difficulty in finding out the Deity. If we are at a loſs here the reaſon muſt be ſome great miſtake and prejudice. We have him continually in our thoughts. We ſee him every where and in every thing. He is the *power* by which we act, the *intelligence* by which we underſtand, and the *time* and *place* in which we live and move and have our beings. In order to obtain an actual ſenſe of his exiſtence, we have nothing to do but to conſider what there is that anſwers to the account now given of the *neceſſity* of his exiſtence. Do we not find it particularly in *abſtract duration* and *ſpace*? Theſe are neceſſary to the conception of all exiſtence. They cannot in thought be deſtroyed. Annihilation being a removal from them, their own annihilation is a contradiction. See p. 27.— The like is true of *abſtract truth* and *poſſibles*. To annihilate *truth* is the ſame with

" &c. &c. Theſe ſort of things are very difficult to *expreſs*, and not eaſy to be *conceived* but by very attentive minds. But to ſuch as can and will attend, nothing (I think) is more demonſtrably convictive." See the Anſwer to the firſt letter from a Gentleman in Glouceſterſhire, inſertedat the end of Dr. Clarke's *Evidences of natural and revealed Religion*.

making truth to be a falſhood; and, therefore, a contradiction in terms. To annihilate *poſſibility* is to make it the ſame with *impoſſibility*; and, therefore, alſo a contradiction.—But there remains to be mentioned other characters of neceſſary exiſtence no leſs important and evident.

Fourthly, Neceſſity of exiſtence admits of no *limitation* or *imperfection*. It can have no more relation to any one time or place or degree of any quality than to another. All degrees of all perfections being *in themſelves* equally conceivable and poſſible, a reaſon is to be always given why a being who poſſeſſes a perfection in *one* degree does not poſſeſs more or leſs of it. We can, for inſtance, conceive any given portion of matter to be larger or ſmaller, and to exiſt in an infinity of places different from that in which it does exiſt. Its ſize and place are, therefore, contingent; and muſt have been determined by ſome cauſe.

This obſervation is applicable to all beings that are limited in reſpect of time, place, or degree of any quality; and, therefore, no ſuch beings can exiſt *neceſſarily*.

Fifthly, A neceſſary being can poſſeſs no perfection in the manner of inferior beings; that

that is, by a *participation* of it as ſomething diſtinct from itſelf and independent of it. In this way he can no more poſſeſs a quality in its *higheſt* than in its *loweſt* degree; or *infinitely*, rather than *finitely*. For an account or cauſe would, on this ſuppoſition, be as much wanted of his poſſeſſing it *infinitely* rather than *finitely*, as of his poſſeſſing it in any *one* degree of finiteneſs rather than another.—For inſtance. A being exiſting neceſſarily cannot be *omnipreſent* by exiſting *in* ſpace as all contingent beings do; becauſe, on this ſuppoſition, we might conceive of immenſity *without* him, and there would be the ſame reaſon for requiring a cauſe of his exiſting in *all* rather than in any *part* of it, that there would be, were he limited in this reſpect, to require a cauſe of that limitation. In ſhort; a being whoſe exiſtence does not conſtitute infinite ſpace can no more exiſt *every where* without a cauſe, than he can *any where*. And the like is true of his eternity, and of every attribute and perfection that we can apply to him.

A being, who is intelligent by the *perception* of truth as ſomewhat independent of him, can no more be *perfectly* intelligent without a cauſe, than he can be ſo *imperfectly*.

It must be just as proper to ask a reason or cause of his knowing *all* truth rather than a *part* of truth, as of his knowing any one part of truth rather than another.—The like is true of *power*; and the result is, that the being who exists *necessarily* must possess these attributes in a manner peculiar to himself. He is intelligent, not by the *apprehension* of truth, but by *being* truth; and *wise*, not by knowing all that is knowable, but by being that intellectual light which enlightens all other beings, and which makes them wise and knowing. He is therefore, WISDOM, rather than *wise*; and REASON, rather than *reasonable*. In like manner; he is ETERNITY, rather than *eternal*; IMMENSITY, rather than *immense*, and POWER, rather than *powerful*. In a word; he is not *benevolent* only, but *benevolence*; not absolutely *perfect* only, but absolute *perfection* itself; the root, the original (or to speak after Dr. *Clarke*, and perhaps still less improperly) the *substratum* * of all that is great and wise and good and excellent.

The

* Dr. Clarke has applied this language only to the *eternity* and *immensity* of the Deity; but none of the modes of expression here used are strictly just, nor perhaps is it possible to find any that are so.

The Deity, Sir *Isaac Newton* says, "by "existing *always and every where* CONSTI- "TUTES infinite space and duration *." This, in my opinion, expresses a most important sentiment. The argument grounded upon it and derived from it which I have endeavoured to represent, is, I doubt not, the argument which Sir ISAAC NEWTON had in view when, at the end of his first letter to Dr. BENTLEY, he intimated that there was an argument for the belief of a Deity, different from that taken from the appearance of design in the constitution of world, which he thought a very strong one; but which it would be most adviseable to suffer to sleep, till the principles on which it was grounded were better received †.

The

* *Deus Durat semper et adest ubique, et existendo semper et ubique durationem et spatium, æternitatem et infinitatem* CONSTITUIT. Cum unaquæque spatii particula sit *semper*, et unumquodque durationis indivisibile momentum, *ubique*, certe rerum omnium fabricator et dominus non erit *nunquam nusquam*. Omnipresens est non per *virtutem* solem, sed etiam per *substantiam*, nam virtus sine substantia subsistere non potest. In ipso continentur et moventur universa, &c. Deum summum necessario existere in confesso est: et eadem necessitate *semper* est et *ubique*. General *Scholium* at the end of Sir *Isaac Newton's Principia*.

† See the 4th volume of Sir Isaac Newton's works, P. 433. "There is yet another argument for a Deity, which

The following inferences are ſuggeſted by this reaſoning.

Firſt, It ſhews an incorrectneſs in Dr. CLARKE's language when he ſpeaks of *neceſſity* as the *reaſon* and *ground* of God's exiſtence. The meaning of this language is obvious; but it has been miſtaken, and given occaſion to the rejection of an argument

" which I take to be a very ſtrong one; but till the " principles on which it is grounded are better receiv- " ed, I think it more adviſeable to let it ſleep." The letter which concludes with theſe words, is dated in 1692. The principles referred to in them were afterwards *intimated* by Sir Iſaac Newton in the general *Scholium* at the end of his *Principia*, and *explained* at large by his friend Dr. Clarke in his book on the evidences of natural and revealed religion; and particularly, in the letters to a gentleman in *Glouceſterſhire*, (well known to have been Dr. BUTLER then a ſtudent in a diſſenting college at *Tewkſbury*,) and two other letters inſerted at the end of the laſt editions of Dr. Clarke's *Evidences*, &c. The firſt letter to Dr. BUTLER is dated in Nov. 1713; and the laſt, in April 1714.—The firſt edition of *Newton's Principia* was publiſhed in 1686; and the ſecond edition, with the addition of the *Scholium* juſt mentioned, in 1713.

I have given theſe dates to ſhew with which of the names now mentioned (three of the greateſt this world has ever known) the mode of reaſoning adopted in theſe pages has originated.

ment * which leads to a juſter manner of conceiving of the Deity than can be poſſible without it.

Dr. CLARKE has ſometimes even called *neceſſity* the *cauſe* of God's exiſtence. This in ſo able a writer is a wonderful inaccuracy. It might however have been excuſed, for it is evident, that he meant no more than that (as ſome account is to be given of the exiſtence of all that exiſts) the *account* of the exiſtence of the firſt cauſe muſt be, that it is *neceſſary*, or that *neceſſity* is an attribute of his exiſtence. In reality; ſuch is its nature that it *admits* of no reaſon, and *wants* no reaſon to be given for it. Does any one want to be informed, why a thing cannot remain after it is taken away, or be and not be at the ſame time; why the whole is not greater than a part; two different from twenty, &c?—The NECESSITY (or SELF-EXISTENCE)

† See a tract lately publiſhed (and entitled, A *demonſtration of the being and attributes of God*) by Dr. HAMILTON. I have read this tract with pleaſure and improvement; but, at the ſame time, not without being diſcouraged by finding that a writer of ſuch diſcernment ſhould reject an argument which appears to me ſo important as Dr. CLARKE's.

of the Deity is an attribute of the ſame kind with the SELF-EVIDENCE of thoſe primary truths on which all ſcience depends, and which, did they not prove themſelves (or require a reaſon to be given for them) it would follow, that there are reaſons of reaſons in *infinitum*, and conſequently that there can be no ſuch thing as truth or reaſon at all. In like manner; were there no exiſtence which required no reaſon to be given for it; that is, were there no being whoſe non-exiſtence can no more be conceived than contradictions can be conceived to be true; it would follow, that nothing could ever have exiſted.

Secondly, This argument furniſhes a proper anſwer to the enquiry, why the firſt cauſe does not himſelf need a cauſe as well as all inferior cauſes. Nature, as atheiſtical writers have ſaid, "has in itſelf a principle of order "and regularity, and here we ſhould reſt. "If we enquire farther, and ſuppoſe a cauſe "of the order of nature, there will be equal "reaſon for requiring a cauſe of that cauſe, "and intelligence in the Divine mind will "want as much to be accounted for as "that which we ſee diſplayed in the crea-"tion."—This is an objection which, tho' it may puzzle, cannot poſſibly have any effect

fect on the belief produced by common ſenſe in the exiſtence of an efficient cauſe of this world. It is (as I have obſerved in the introduction to theſe obſervations) as incapable of influencing conviction in this caſe as it would be were it applied, with the like view, to to any other obvious effect of contrivance and ſkill. It ſuggeſts, however, an enquiry which occurs naturally to every one who attends to this ſubject; and the preceding reaſoning gives a full anſwer to it. Certain it is, that there is a manner of exiſtence *peculiar* to the firſt cauſe; and we have ſeen what that is.—Of the world and all that exiſts in it; and, in general, of all limited beings, we know by intuitive perception that their exiſtence is *contingent*; and that, conſequently, there muſt be a *cauſe* which has determined their exiſtence: But of this cauſe himſelf we know that, exiſting *neceſſarily* in the ſenſe I have explained, he can want no cauſe, and that the very idea of *cauſality* when applied to him is a contradiction.

Thirdly, We are led by this argument to reflect on the nature of God's preſence with us, and the abſurdity of ſome of the doubts which have been entertained with reſpect to his

his exiſtence and attributes. It appears, that he is always preſent with all beings, not merely by his *notice* and *influence* *, but by his *eſſence*; and that the belief of his exiſtence is unavoidable, and implied in the very act of endeavouring to ſuppoſe its annihilation. So *real* is it as to be the ground of all reality, and of the *conception* of all reality. There is nothing ſo intimately united to us; nothing of which we have ſo conſtant and irreſiſtible a conſciouſneſs. We meet him in every truth we contemplate, in every idea that paſſes through our minds, and every inſtant that meaſures our exiſtence: And for this very reaſon we overlook him. We cannot believe that he is ſo near us as he is; and becauſe *every thing*, he becomes *nothing* to us. Wonderful, indeed, are the conceptions of ſome learned men on this ſubject. Rather than recognize his nature in what they know to be neceſſarily exiſtent, eternal, and infinite; they run into contradictions, and will not allow exiſtence to any thing except what exiſts after the manner of *contingent* beings and *ſecond* cauſes. They

* Non per *virtutem* ſolam ſed per *ſubſtantiam*. See the quotation from *Newton*, in p. 501.

They ſpeak of his *immenſity*, but immenſity (that is, infinite ſpace) is *nothing*; and, therefore, his exiſting *every where* muſt be the ſame with his exiſting *no-where*.—In like manner; they ſpeak of his exiſting through all *duration*, and of his knowledge as extending to all *knowables*, and his power to all *poſſibles*; but *duration*, *knowables*, and *poſſibles* (however preſuppoſed in every notion of intelligence, efficacy, and exiſtence) are nothing; and the belief of the contrary is, according to them, derived from analogies and prejudices which have miſled us.

Fourthly, The neceſſity of God's exiſtence, as it has been now explained, affords us an intuitive perception of the INFINITY of all his attributes.—To ſuppoſe that any perfections, as they exiſt in him, are limited (or that he poſſeſſes only a given ſhare of them leaving an infinity behind belonging to no being, and having no nature for its *ſubſtratum*) is a monſtrous abſurdity. It is reducing him to the rank of contingent beings; and the ſame with ſuppoſing theſe perfections not to be *themſelves*.

Fifthly, The preceding reaſoning evidently implies the UNITY of the Deity. It is contingent exiſtence alone that admits of

diverſity

diverſity and multiplicity. Simplicity and unity are included in the idea of neceſſity. Every neceſſary truth (the equality, for inſtance, of an angle in a ſemicircle to a right angle) is one, a diviſion of it into *two* truths being ſelf-contradictory, becauſe either the ſame with dividing it into itſelf and *another* truth, and, conſequently, *no* diviſion of it; or the ſame with dividing it into two *other* truths, and conſequently its *annihilation*, that is, its *falſhood* *. The like is to be obſerved of that infinity of abſtract truth and intelligibles, the neceſſary exiſtence of which forces itſelf into our thoughts, and is the foundation of every idea of reaſon and intelligence.—Particular truths are only partial views of the ſelf-exiſtent and parent mind, as the diviſions we make of *time* and *place* are only partial conceptions of that eternity and immenſity which we know to be incapable of diviſion; and which, however apparently *different*, are yet ſo perfectly *one*, that neither of them can be conceived without the other, every point of *immenſity* being

* In the ſame manner preciſely the diviſion of *ones-ſelf* into *two ſelfs* is contradictory, becauſe either the ſame with a diviſion of ones-ſelf into ones-ſelf and *another*, which is *no* diviſion; or the ſame with a diviſion of ones-ſelf into two *others*, which is *annihilation*.

ing neceſſarily *eternal*, and every moment of eternity being neceſſarily *immenſe* *.

In ſhort; there are numberleſs beings who *occupy* duration and ſpace; but there can be only *one* being whoſe exiſtence *conſtitutes* duration and ſpace.—There are numberleſs beings who participate of perfection in an infinite variety of degrees; but there can be but one being who is abſolute perfection *itſelf*. There are numberleſs beings who are powerful, wiſe and benevolent; but there can be but *one* being of whoſe nature, power, wiſdom and benevolence in neceſſary union and forming one idea, are the eſſential attributes.

Sixthly, From the preceding reaſoning may, I think, be inferred the particular importance of the queſtion diſcuſſed in this treatiſe. My principal deſign has been to ſhew that right and wrong are diſtinctions in the natures of things; and that moral obligations conſtitute a part of eternal truth and reaſon. If then the natures of things and eternal truth and reaſon are the ſame with

* *Unaquæque ſpatii particula eſt* SEMPER, *et unumquodque durationis indiviſibile momemtum* UBIQUE. NEWTON's general ſcholium.

with the nature of the Deity, it follows that he must be a being of complete moral excellence. The following observation may help to illustrate this.

An argument for the goodness of God has been taken from that part of the constitution of the world which makes pain, when it exceeds certain limits, to terminate either in *its own* destruction or in the destruction of the *sufferer*. This, if derived from arbitrary appointment, is a merciful appointment, shewing pain not to be the end of the maker of the world. But, if derived necessarily from the nature of pain as such, it is a circumstance in the natures of things which indicates more decidedly the will of the first cause. The truth is; that pain and disorder imply weakness and self-destructiveness; and that, on the contrary, happiness and order, implying strength and stability, tend necessarily to preserve, augment, and perpetuate themselves.

This shews us what the final issue of events must be. But that *preference* of happiness; that *repugnance* to pain; that discernment of moral obligation, and *approbation* of beneficence, which (if I have argued rightly) are unavoidable to all beings who perceive *truth*,

shews

ſhews this more plainly, by proving beyond a doubt, the holy diſpoſition and benevolence of that nature which is the ſacred root of all that is true, and right, and good.

Laſtly, This argument is, in the higheſt degree, encouraging to our hopes. It ſhews, that it is even a contradiction to ſuppoſe a ſingle circumſtance in the adminiſtration of the univerſe, which ought to have been otherwiſe than it is; or any events to happen of which it may be truly ſaid, that nature would have been *better* conſtituted and the courſe of events *better* directed, had they been excluded. This, according to the preceding reaſoning, is the ſame with ſuppoſing truth to be falſhood, and poſſibility *im*poſſibility; or, in other words, the ſame with ſuppoſing the *annihilation* of *neceſſary* truth and reaſon—of that eternal and almighty and omnipreſent intelligence and goodneſs, which are by their natures indeſtructible, and muſt be all controuling.—We have, then, the fulleſt aſſurance, that all is well under God's government, and that every thing may be expected to take place in the creation which can be a juſt object of deſire. This throws a reviving light over the creation,

tion, and should teach us to welcome all that happens, trusting implicitly in that wisdom which, because perfect, we cannot fathom; ascribing confidently whatever looks dark to our own blindness; and studying diligently to exhibit in our own conduct that benevolence and rectitude which govern all things, under a conviction that, if we do this, we cannot fail of being infinitely happy.

FINIS